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*BY THE SAME AUTHOR*

THE RUSSIAN OPERA  
PETER ILICH TCHAI-  
KOVSKY

POETRY & PROGRESS IN  
RUSSIA





*Pictor Pashetov*

THE VIRGIN OF THE ALEXANDER

# THE RUSSIAN ARTS

BY  
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expressive dancing. Thus we find quite intelligent people talking of Russian decorative art as though a Diaghilev, or a Benois, had called the whole wonderful rhythmic co-operation into activity with one wave of the magician's wand.

As a matter of fact the Russian Arts like all other art—have grown gradually into their present fully self-conscious and highly-developed state. This is what I hoped to show in my book. But, in common with other writers on Russian questions, I soon found myself confronted with gulfs of general ignorance which had to be bridged before I could hope to make this fact clear to the average reader. I could take nothing for granted as regards our knowledge of the early history of Russian art. I had therefore the choice of giving merely a microscopic, bird's-eye view of my subject as a whole, or of expanding my book into a thing of portentous size such as I had not contemplated at the outset. Bearing in mind the awakening popular interest in Russia, I was particularly reluctant to adopt the second course. A third way out of the difficulty was for the time being to pass over some aspects of my subject, and concentrate on Architecture, Painting in its various branches, and Sculpture. This I finally decided to do. The omission of music seemed to me less regrettable, because we are now beginning to know something about its genesis and history; while as regards the folk-art, although I have not devoted any portion of my book to specific treatment of this

subject, its influence interpenetrates all the fine arts, so that it is impossible to ignore it entirely.

My work, therefore, does little more than lead to the confines of a great field for future study. Its object is to prepare the way, and give us certain criteria for the intelligent acceptance of gifts that the next few years will assuredly bring us with a freer exchange of spiritual and artistic ideals between ourselves and our newly-found and glorious friend in eastern Europe. That this volume will be useful as an introduction to the study of Russian art I sincerely believe; because although there are a good many books and articles in French and English dealing with particular phases and branches of the national arts of Russia, I know of nothing accessible which covers so wide a scope as that which is included in this volume.

Planned, as long ago as 1897, when I first visited Russia and learnt to love the soul of her people under the guidance of that fervent champion of nationality, Vladimir Stasov, it has waited a long time to see the light; waited, in fact, until the mists of prejudice and ignorance which for a century have obscured Britain's view of Russia, had lifted sufficiently to allow even a rush-light ray of illumination such as this book contains to be welcome in this country. For we are now pathetically anxious to atone for our sins of ignorance.

Since I first began to think out "The Russian Arts," nearly twenty years ago, while working in the Im-

perial Public Library in Petrograd, where Stasov was then director of the Fine Arts' section, a complete change has come over the æsthetic ideals of the Russians. The prosaic, altruistic realism of the second half of last century, which was partly the reaction from the dilettantism of earlier years, and partly the outcome of the awakened sympathy of the classes with the masses, has given place to new impulses to which I have only done imperfect justice in the last chapter of my book. With many phases of the twentieth-century movement I feel in complete sympathy; but I cannot concur in the opinion of some contemporary critics: that the New Men have utterly extinguished the Old Men, and obliterated for ever the spirit which gave birth to their works. Nothing can obliterate a movement so noble in conception, and so enfranchising in its results, as that of the national realists who broke with the Academy of Arts in 1863. That they stopped their ears to the cry of "Art for art's sake," has possibly rendered them ridiculous in the eyes of nations less strenuously occupied with questions of social reform than Russia in the 'sixties and 'seventies. But efficient "professionalism" has never been and never, I think, will be—the chief consideration in Russian art or literature. We must accept this fact if we are to understand the national methods of expression.

A long list of works of reference in the Russian language would serve no useful purpose in a volume of this kind. Novitsky's popular *History of Russian*

*Art from the Earliest Times*, published in 1903—is a useful book of general information; but besides devoting a good deal of space to phases of the subject which would not appeal forcibly to foreigners, it scarcely touches upon the developments of the last twenty years. A. Benois is still at work upon a monumental history of native art, an *édition de luxe* beyond the purses of the majority of those now awakening to the beauty and originality of the Russian Arts. For the slight sketch of early Russian architecture Ivan Zabelin's book, *The Domestic Life of the Russian Tsars*, and articles by him in publications of the Russian Archæological Society, and V. V. Souslov's *Materials for a History of Russian Architecture*,\* were my chief authorities. For iconography, the works of D. A. Rovinsky have been consulted among others. The period of the national and realistic movement inaugurated by Perov has been dealt with by many critics, of whom Vladimir Stassov† was probably the most intimately connected with its chief representatives. There is scarcely any branch of Russian art or archæology, from church spires to needlework, from iconography to the realism of Repin, on which Stassov has not written racy and authoritatively. Articles upon the latest tendencies by Benois, S. Makovsky, and Voloshin appear from time to time

\* "Domashny Byt Russky Tsarei," Moscow, 1895

† "Materialy k' istorie drevno-Russkavo zedchestva," Petrograd, 1889.

‡ V. V. Stassov, *Sobranie Sochineni*, 1848-1906, Petrograd; and *Russkie Narodnie Ornament*, Petrograd, 1872.

in various periodical publications. The works of the poet, Vyacheslav-Ivanov, are impregnated with the new spirit in art and literature. Lastly I have drawn upon material collected during several visits to Russia; personal notes made in the Imperial Public Library, Petrograd, and in the chief galleries of both capitals during a period ranging from 1897 to the early autumn of 1915. It will be seen that many years have gone to the making of this brief synthesis. Yet, it is with a deep sense of its inadequacy that I offer it to a public which, both in the British Empire, and in America, has shown such a generous and stimulating interest in my volume, *The Russian Opera*.

My thanks are due to the Editor of the *Fortnightly Review* for permission to reprint the greater part of my article on Verestschagin, which appeared shortly after the painter's death, in 1904.

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# THE RUSSIAN ARTS

## CHAPTER I

### ARCHITECTURE

"Wooden Russia." The Construction of a Homestead. Timber Churches. First Stone Churches at Kiev. Architecture of Novgorod the Great and Pskov. Local Modifications of the Byzantine Style. Votive Crosses. *Golossniki*.

**I**N a volume on Russian art of limited size and popular aim it is not advisable to devote much space to archæological questions; it is well, however, to realize for a moment that the primitive inhabitants of those regions which now comprise the Western Russian Empire used their scanty leisure amid the hard struggle for existence in trying to ornament and beautify their weapons and the common objects in daily use among them. The flint implements of the cave-dwellers bearing rude attempts to represent a seal, a bear or a fish; the carvings on grave-stones showing men wearing *bashliks* such as may still be seen in South Russia, and conical caps almost identical in shape with those worn by the monks of to-day; the *babas*, or stone idols, of prehistoric times, varying from mere blocks of stone,

the upper part of which is roughly hewn into the semblance of a human head, to the more finished carvings in high relief found upon the rocks in Podolia—all these relics, though interesting, are the province of the antiquarian, and have but a remote bearing upon the national arts of Russia. They serve to demonstrate the fact that those who dwelt in the land in the hazy distant past produced much the same kind of primitive art works as those of other races at similar stages of development. These carved and decorated articles are certainly not inferior to those found in Western Europe. But to bring the question within the scope of this book it would first be necessary to prove an ethnographical connection between the primitive occupants of Scythia and the present inhabitants of Russia—a wide subject of discussion.

Cave-dwellings have been found in the southern provinces, but as the population increased and moved northwards to the regions of the vast virgin forests, these were soon discarded for wooden dwellings of an elementary description. Such smoky wooden huts, built without chimneys in order to economize the heat, are not even yet extinct in the remoter districts of Russia. All the towns in the early historic days were built exclusively of this abundant and handy material. From the X. century onwards stone buildings began to make their appearance here and there; but even while they steadily increased in number they did not supplant the wooden structures.

The two architectures developed side by side, borrowing something from each other as the years went on, but for the most part showing distinct characteristics, the less durable material clinging to the older forms far more tenaciously than the stone buildings. Time after time the wooden towns were burnt down, involving the comparatively rare stone edifices in their ruin ; but the joiners' and carpenters' craft was a folk craft, and, thanks to the conservative tendencies of the people, the rebuilding was nearly always on the same lines as before ; while in the restoration of the stone churches and palaces the original appearance was frequently completely altered. Since the monumental buildings of the country owe much of their national character to the influence of the more popular form it will be well to begin the study of the national architecture with a short survey of " wooden Russia."

The first wooden structures were the simple dwellings mentioned above, which have developed into the more comfortable *izba* of the well-to-do Russian peasant of to-day. Built usually by the dwellers' own hands, the *izba*, like the log-hut of Canada, is constructed of round tree-trunks with a high pitched roof and a carved cornice. The appearance of the house varies with the individual skill and prosperity of the occupant. The staircase is usually outside, and leads to a roofed porch which is often elaborately carved, while the principal beam which supports the roof has each end roughly hewn into the semblance of

a horse's head, or a simple geometrical design. The Russian love of colour sometimes leads to the decorative work being picked out in bright tints, often without regard to the quality of the workmanship beneath. As one of the "Marriage Songs" of Great Russia quaintly expresses it :

Be the *terem*\* rough or planed, what boots it  
When with gaudy hues the painter coats it ?  
Though our Luke in learning may not shine,  
Yet his clothes are always wondrous fine.

In the Ukraine the peasants' huts are plastered and whitewashed. They have no carving, but the roofs are cosily thatched, and, embowered among orchards, they strike English people as resembling the old cottages of Devonshire.

From these primitive shelters from cold and wet, the builders probably passed on to fulfil less material needs. It is however a matter of controversy whether in these early days of social life in Russia there were pagan temples or merely altars. The word *Kapistchy*, used by some of the first chroniclers may apparently be taken in either sense. Probably the temples described by the early travellers to Russia were introduced by the Scandinavians when they first visited the country. The fact that they were said to be of wood and that the shrine containing the idol was separated from the body of the building by *columns* from which curtains were suspended, seems to indicate their origin, for, as Stasov points out, the Slavs

\* The upper storey of a house.

invariably laid their beams horizontally upon a framework, whereas the Scandinavians placed their beams vertically, so that columns were a natural outgrowth of their method of construction.

We learn from the Chronicles that at least two wooden churches existed in Kiev before the Byzantine builders visited Russia. From the treaty made between Prince Igor and the Greeks in 945 A.D., it is evident that there were already a considerable number of Christians in the city, and that they had their own place of worship - the Church of St. Ilya, or Elias ; while after Igor's widow, the famous Princess Olga, had been baptized at Constantinople, in 957 A.D., she built a church dedicated to St. Nicholas upon the tomb of Askold, one of the Scandinavian adventurers who came to Novgorod the Great in the train of Rurik and afterwards conquered for himself the more southern town of Kiev.

Needless to say no trace now exists of any of the primitive wooden churches and dwellings of Russia, but there are various sources from which we may learn what they were like. The early chronicles and the folk literature contain many allusions to the style and dimensions of the old wooden buildings. We see them also depicted in the illuminated missals from the XI. century onward, and although these miniatures may not always represent the original edifices, yet, thanks to local traditions, and the habit of reproducing the primitive types, it is certainly possible to form a fairly clear idea of the " Wooden

Russia" of the past. Zabelin, the great authority on the domestic life of mediæval Russia, thinks the wooden structures often endured for fully two centuries and served as models for the new buildings of many generations.

The early dwellings of the upper and richer classes in Russia started from one or more square frameworks (*klety*), the supports of which were driven into the earth without any prepared foundations, and the timbers laid horizontally between these uprights. The buildings were roofed with wood, each block having its own style of roof, which was covered with thinly cut wooden scales in place of tiles. Overhanging eaves were indispensable shelters in that rigorous climate. These main buildings were connected by covered passages or vestibules (*seny*); while in the courtyard, enclosed by a wooden palisade, were added hangars, stables, storerooms, bathhouses -- the whole group forming a *Khor*, or homestead. In poor houses there were merely apertures to allow the escape of smoke, but in the better-class dwellings the windows were usually oblong, occasionally rounded at the top, and latticed, or protected by iron grilles. Talc was used instead of glass, which did not find its way to Russia until a much later period.

"The life of even a rich man did not extend much beyond this chain of *klety*," says Zabelin. "The chief problem of his life was the erection of his homestead in the locality that best suited his domestic needs."

These blocks of connected buildings were naturally quite unsymmetrical, and, to Western eyes, more bizarre than beautiful. But when we observe that every portion of the original buildings and every addition made to them was the outcome of some real daily need, and placed exactly where it was required; that nothing in the vast wooden piles was built for show or at the dictates of caprice; then we can realise that out of this apparently haphazard method of construction grew a sense of balance which more than atones for the lack of symmetrical design. Thus we often notice how two contrasting portions of a Russian building are equalised; the one which is higher and more delicate in treatment being placed in juxtaposition with another more massive, but lower.

The special features of these ancestral homes were the spacious courtyards with several entrances the chief of which often had a porch or tower; the staircase of honour (*kraznoe kryltso*) outside the principal building, which was the scene of the ceremonial receptions and departures of the master of the house and of his guests; the covered passages (*seny*) connecting the blocks of buildings, light and large vestibules where recreation and exercise could be taken in bad weather; the *gridnitsa*, or audience room, used also as a banquetting hall; and the *terem*, which was often a kind of belvedere with windows looking to every point of the compass. The situation of this apartment was the lightest and quietest in the house,

and it was therefore set aside for the use of the women of the establishment. It took many architectural forms. Sometimes it was built up in a kind of pyramidal style and crowned by a cupola. Houses not infrequently rose to three storeys, with a look-out place, or sleeping apartments, on the top floor. The wealth and position of the owner was indicated by the loftiness of his abode. There are many other characteristic features belonging to the old *Khory*—indeed the study of these early mediæval homes, gathered in a fragmentary way from the chronicles and legends and more fully from Zabelin and other authorities, is extraordinarily fascinating. But we must not linger over it, since it is in ecclesiastical architecture that we shall see wood used in the greatest variety of characteristic forms.

Naturally in a land of forests the building of stone churches was comparatively rare. Great cities or richly endowed monasteries could send further afield for more durable materials and for master-masons who knew how to use them. But in the villages and poorer urban districts wood was, and is, the staple building-stuff, alike for the *izba*, the mansion, the *dacha*, or country cottage of modern days, and the church. It would not have been possible to erect wooden churches which adhered strictly to the traditional Byzantine plan, even if the peasant joiners and carpenters had possessed a design from which to work; therefore they built in freedom and developed a style of their own—a truly national style—

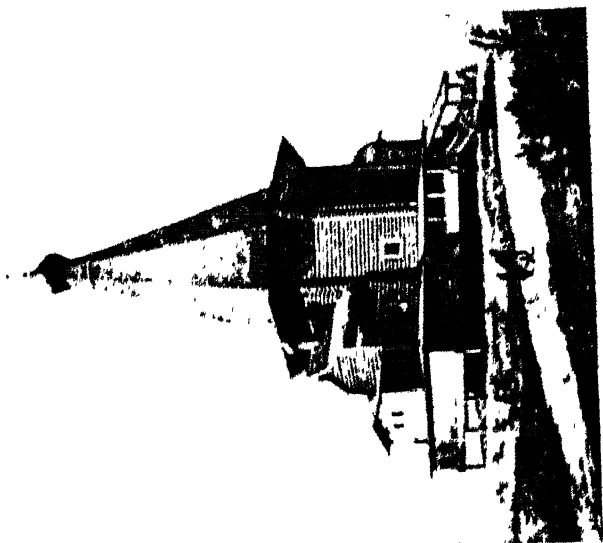
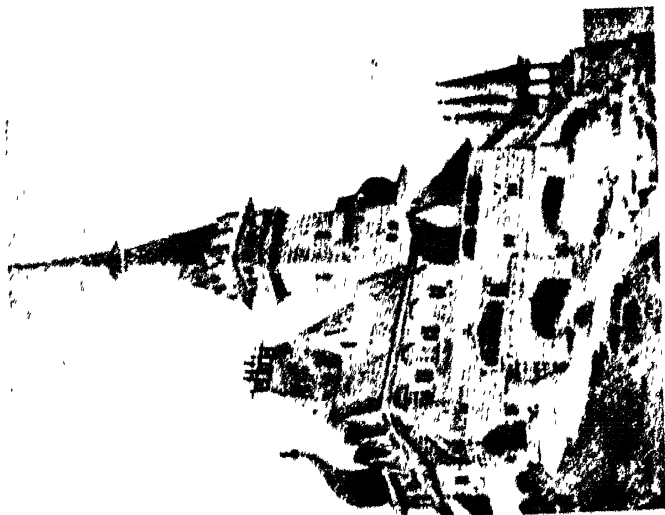
from which, as we shall see, the Russian architects of a later date borrowed many quaint and original features. The carpenter's craft and its phraseology were handed down from generation to generation, and so it comes about that we may still see in Russia churches that have much the same aspect as those erected in the early days of her conversion to Christianity.

The most elementary type consisted of a quadrilateral framework nearly square, a narrower section at the east end for the altar and sanctuary, and an open gallery or porch at the west side. The roof was a simple double span surmounted by a small pinnacle with a cross, or sometimes by a cross only. In a more developed type we sometimes see the church raised on piles or other enclosed foundations, the entrance being reached by a staircase and the church itself occupying the first floor of the building. This custom has remained characteristic of Russian ecclesiastic architecture to the present day. The stairs sometimes led to a kind of outer gallery like a verandah, roofed and occasionally enclosed and pierced with small windows. When the church was on the ground floor this gallery led to the *trapeza*, a kind of refectory in which on certain festivals the well-to-do parishioners gave a feast to their poorer brethren. Such "confraternities" are mentioned in the chronicles and folksongs. At other times it served as a meeting place where parish business was discussed under the presidency of the priest. The church often

consisted of a central octagonal framework, with rectangular additions at the east and west ends. The conical 'tent-shaped' roof was generally adopted to cover the centre of the church, rising from this octagon base and tapering off until it was crowned at the apex by a small bulbous cupola and a cross. These spires sometimes rose to a height of seventy feet. The altar section often had a barrel-shaped roof. The roofs and small cupolas were covered with a fish-scale covering of wooden tiles. A good deal of carving decorated the cornices, windows and portals of some of these churches. This type is widely distributed all over the north of Russia, as far as the Government of Olonets and the Oural Mountains, in fact in all the districts formerly colonized by Novgorod the Great. There are also wooden churches with many cupolas. The original St. Sophia at Novgorod is said to have had thirteen such "heads."

The wooden churches of South Russia were designed on somewhat different lines. Here we find three or four octagonal frameworks joined from east to west, crowned by a single cupola, and having separate entrances and sections for men and women. Occasionally the frameworks are clustered together, the centre one rising somewhat higher than the rest; others keep to the cruciform plan, with a large central tower and cupola and smaller ones over the arms of the cross.

A few wooden churches are obviously attempts to copy stone edifices; but generally speaking it is





the stone building that is indebted to the popular wooden architecture.

In 988 A.D. Vladimir, the Red Sun, was baptized at Kherson, and his people also received baptism in a vast company, in the waters of the river Dneiper. One of Vladimir's first acts after his conversion was the destruction of the colossal statue of Perun, the God of Thunder, of which the body was of wood, the head of silver, and the lips of gold. On the site occupied by the temple of Perun, Vladimir erected a church dedicated to St. Vassily (Basil) and inaugurated the first period of stone architecture in Russia. The Church of St. Basil has since been replaced by that of The Three Saints, but some fragments of the N. wall and the apse of the ancient edifice are still visible. Still more famous was the Church of the Tithes (*Dessiatinaya*) to the endowment of which Vladimir devoted a tenth part of his revenues. Completed in 996 A.D. it took seven years in building and was sumptuous for its period and locality. When the ferocious Khan Baty ravaged Kiev with his hordes in 1240, the populace made their last stand round this church. Those who could not bear arms took refuge in the building, and the galleries being overcrowded, they collapsed, bringing down the walls with them. For centuries the famous church remained a heap of ruins, until Peter Mogila, who established the College of Kiev in 1631, began its restoration. Although some fragments of the first building were incorporated in the small church he raised on the site, no

real restoration was effected. Mogila's church fell into decay in its turn and remained untouched until in 1824 the Metropolitan of Kiev, Eugene Bolkhovitinov, excavated before erecting the present building. The original foundations were then laid bare revealing a rectangular ground-plan with a triple apse; a floor paved with square slabs of dark red granite, together with fragments of coloured marbles, mosaic and fresco work attesting that the church had originally been planned and decorated in the approved Byzantine style.

By the middle of the XI. century, Kiev could boast of several stone churches, and during its most flourishing period, immediately preceding the Mongol invasion, it must have appeared, in the words of Leroy Beaulieu, "like a small replica of Byzantium itself, or a Ravenna of the North." Of all this splendour every trace vanished with the repeated depredations of the Tatars, and the city remained for long ages the ruined and forgotten tomb of its ancient glories. The inhabitants were too poor to restore the old monuments and could only erect smaller buildings in a different style upon the same venerated sites.

The fate of the Cathedral of St. Sophia at Kiev, founded by Yaroslav I., in 1037, was rather less disastrous than that of the churches mentioned above. Although the present outer walls belong to the period of its restorations by Peter Mogila and Mazepa in the XVII century, its original construction is clearly

traceable within the new shell. It must have had five apsidal terminations and two towers at the W. end containing spiral staircases leading to galleries. In its decorative scheme this cathedral is said to have borne some likeness to St. Mark's at Venice, but of its frescoes and mosaics I shall give further details in the chapter dealing with mural decorations.

Other early churches in Kiev are the Zlatoverkhny, or Church of the Golden Tops, with its seven shining cupolas, in the Mikhailevsky Monastery (1008) ; the church of the great Lavra, or Monastery (1073) ; the church of the Transfiguration of the Saviour (Spasso-Preobrajensky) and the church of the Monastery of St. Cyril - all of which show some fragments of the original buildings of the XI. and XII. centuries, and relics of mural paintings of the same period.

The churches of Kiev, and of S. W. Russia in general, show much the same leading features. All seem to have as ground plan the so-called Byzantine or Greek cross in the centre of which stood the four massive piers which supported arches upon which, by means of pendentives, a circular base was formed for the cylinder or drum on which the cupola was raised. In order to lessen the pressure of this, the apsidal walls on the E. side were joined to the nearest pair of piers, which were completed by semi-circular vaults. On the other sides of the church other pillars were ranged in symmetrical order, supporting the lateral arches which, being united to the vaults at

the N.W. and S. arms of the cross, formed almost an exact square. The square was lengthened to an oblong when it was desired to increase the accommodation of the building, or to add to the number of cupolas. Consequently churches identical in ground plan vary somewhat in details. To this fundamental design were added porches, galleries and corner towers. The smaller churches follow much the same lines. One apse is sometimes found, but three, symbolising the Trinity, are more usual. With regard to material, although I have employed the word *stone* in a general sense to distinguish between structures of wood and masonry, yet brick and cement were very commonly used in the churches of S.W. Russia, and stone in the more northern districts of Novgorod and Souzdal.

On the façade most churches are divided into several sections on the N. and S. sides by pilasters meeting in arches above. This indication on the outside of the church of its internal disposition is a characteristic feature of Russian architecture. The use of semi-columns is very general in the decorations of the apses and drums of the cupolas giving to the building, as Novitsky\* points out, a curious many-facetted appearance. Although delicate mouldings and relief work were not adapted to the climate, the cornices are often beautiful in a simple way, running like a riband above the tops of the pilasters. The windows are usually small and insignificant, ex-

\* "Istoric Russkavo Iskousstvo." Mamantov Press, Moscow.

tending the whole length of the façade in two or three rows according to the height of the walls. Occasionally they are divided into three lights. In the octagonal drums there is generally one window to each facet. The central cupola almost invariably towers above the rest, which often decrease in size according to their distance from the chief dome.

Internally the church is divided at the eastern piers by the *Ikonostasis*, a form of rood screen which shuts off the *Bema* or sanctuary containing the high altar from the main body of the building. In front of the *Ikonostasis* and generally slightly raised above the floor of the Church is the *Soleas* or choir, and the *Ambon* on which the priest emerges from time to time during the Celebration of the Holy Rites. The *Proaulion*, or chief porch, is at the W. end. The nave occupies the centre of the building, and there are lateral aisles. When the apses contain side altars the *Ikonostasis* is so arranged as to permit access to them without entering the Sanctuary, the doors of which are closed to women.

The churches of S.W. Russia are not of pure Byzantine type. Vladimir was baptized in the Khersonese, and as from that region he gathered his clergy, and all the accessories needful for divine worship in his new cathedral at Kiev, it is reasonable to suppose that his architects also came from that district; consequently the churches they erected bear a family resemblance to those of the Caucasus, the Taurida and the Greek Archipelago.

When we follow the progress of architecture further north, we find the first Greek builders giving place to Russian craftsmen who, in adapting themselves to local conditions, soon dropped the slavish imitation of Byzantine models and introduced some strikingly original features of their own. From the X. century onwards Russia became the half-way house in which the arts of the eastern and western world met and fused and were welded into new forms bearing the stamp of Russian genius. Superficially we have accepted the idea that Russian art owes its very existence to Byzantine influence. But the art of Byzantium was itself the outcome of many and complex elements, and was, moreover, entering upon a period of decadence when it was first introduced among the southern Slavs. In early Russian architecture and ornament there are traces of influences far more vigorous than anything that could have been gleaned from the Byzantine teachers, who were the Greek missionaries of the IX. and X. centuries. It seems probable, as Stasov so strongly asserts, that the Slavs received *at first hand* those far Eastern and Persian elements which characterize their early art. Another influence which affected northern Russia in the first years of her existence as a civilized country was the Scandinavian. Although Viollet le Duc is inclined to think that certain points of resemblance can be accounted for by the fact that the Norsemen, like the Russians, borrowed from the same oriental sources, yet it would be a mistake to underrate the

effect of Scandinavian influence upon the vigorous art of Novgorod the Great. To this Slavonian capital came the three Viking brothers, Rurik, Sineus, and Truvor in 862 A.D. Here Oleg reigned until he transferred the seat of government to Kiev in 880 A.D. Yaroslav the Lawgiver (1019-1054), the son of Vladimir the Red Sun, gave many privileges to Novgorod, so that already in the XI. century the city was a flourishing commercial centre. Here, too, flowed back the tide of life and prosperity after Kiev had been ruined by the Tatars. By the XII. century Novgorod had a republic of its own with a popular assembly (*Veché*) and an elected leader (*Possadnik*). One of the cities of the Hanseatic League, it pushed its trade far and wide into the Baltic and harboured a prosperous German colony within its gates. It is to be expected that a city so rich, so proud and so independent,\* would foster the growth of arts sufficiently vigorous to emancipate themselves from Byzantine traditions and display some wholly original characteristics. This, indeed, we shall find to be the case when we consider more closely the decorative arts of the Russian people.

Novgorod was preserved by its situation and power from the Mongol incursions that reduced Kiev to a ruin. Consequently the city still contains some of the most interesting relics of the past. The Cathedral of St. Sophia, though it has been pillaged

\* "Who can contend against God and Great Novgorod?" was the popular cry of the inhabitants in the XI. century.

more than once since its erection by Jaroslav between 1045-1052, on the site of an earlier wooden church, remains practically intact as regards its external structure. Although its ground plan resembles that of its namesake at Kiev, the archæologist Suslov believes that it was built without any direct model in view, merely following the general principles of the Kiev style. It is constructed of a local stone of a yellowish grey tint, alternating with rows of reddish bricks or pantiles. The walls were thickly coated with mortar about a century later, when the roof which had been previously tiled, was covered with lead. The cathedral was smaller and less ornate than that of Kiev, but it contains some remarkable mural decorations, of which I shall speak later on.

The history of Pskov, "the younger brother" of Novgorod, is so closely bound up with that of the older town that their arts are usually examined side by side. While St. Sophia at Novgorod differs very little from the accepted type of Russo-Byzantine architecture, the Cathedral church of the Spasso-Mirojsky Monastery at Pskov, built in 1155, shows distinct traces of original and local methods. Here the side apses are much lower than in the earlier examples. The plainness of the walls, the smallness of the windows, and general lack of decorative effect, proclaim it to be one of the elementary essays of native builders. One of the first modifications of the Kiev style was the replacement of the three apses by one semicircular termination; and here we

see it in transition, the lateral apses being little more than recesses. Gradually these diminished and vanished entirely. Another innovation soon followed. The eastern-most pair of piers which supported the dome were found to interfere with the worshippers' full view of the ritual; also when the priest and his assistants came out of the Sanctuary with the Elements during the Celebration, it was desirable that they should be more directly under the representation of Christ, which adorned the centre of the cupola. To this end the *Ikonostasis* was brought forward as far as the eastern piers, giving a very large proportion of space to the *Bema*, so that after a time builders began to make the E. end of the church rather narrower than the W. The church of St. John the Baptist at Pskov is one of the first examples of this change. The bricks used in this building are so like English or Dutch bricks in colour and baking that they are believed to have been imported from one of these countries. Double sloping roofs, perpendicularly intersecting, are typical of the Novgorodian period, and this style of covering, like the band of decorative work high up on the façade, is due to German-Romanesque influence.

The Church of the Transfiguration of the Saviour at Novgorod (1374) presents a well-developed example of the architecture of this district and period. It is a small structure with a single apse; the walls are divided into sections by vertical lines finished above by a row of semi-circular arches. The apse is decorated

ted by vertical spiral mouldings blending in the roof above in two arches between which is a recess. The drum of the cupola has a row of semicircular arches by way of ornamentation, and over the window is a similar moulding ending in a horizontal bend. Some of the windows, however, are distinguished by ogival arches. A number of churches of this type are still to be found in the vicinity of Pskov and Novgorod.

The tendency of windows to become fewer and smaller is due to climatic conditions, and to the same cause the change in the form of the cupolas is no doubt attributable. Originally semicircular, like the Byzantine dome, they were found unable to support a great weight of snow. Consequently, the apex was drawn upwards and sharpened, while the sides were widened, evolving the characteristic Russian cupola, which is onion shaped. Those who are unwilling to give the Russians credit for any methods which are not purely derivative, assert that this form is borrowed from the Mongols. Novitsky thinks it is a purely local modification owing its origin, like the tent-shaped roof, to the wooden architecture, while the drawing up of the apex corresponded to the tendency to build high, which is the characteristic of all races dwelling in flat countries. This cupola made its appearance in the XII. century, particularly in the region of Novgorod, where the Tatars had not penetrated. Another peculiarity of the Novgorod-Pskov period was the abandonment of pendentives

and the construction of arches "in steps" to support the drum of the cupola. This method of superposed arches was carried by the builders from Pskov into the architecture of Moscow.

A feature of the Novgorod churches are sundry crosses scattered on their walls without symmetrical arrangement and obviously without decorative intention. They are of two kinds: votive and memorial. The first are generally Greek crosses cemented into circular or oval niches and placed at the entrances of churches, about six feet from the ground. The accompanying illustration shows a remarkable specimen from the Church of St. Sophia at Novgorod. It has four rather unequal arms and hatchet-shaped ends, and is carved in low relief with representations of The Crucifixion (centre), The Annunciation (top), The Nativity (left), The Resurrection (right), and The Ascension (foot). The inscription, though partly illegible, reveals the fact that it was a cross offered in adoration from the faithful by Alexander, Archbishop of Novgorod, between 1360-1388. The grain of the stone is rough, and the workmanship coarse. It is considered to be the design of a good *ikon* painter carved by inferior workmen.

The memorial crosses are never placed in niches, but stand out from the flat surface of the wall. Like the "crosses of worship" they have their symbolic meaning; for, while the former by their enclosed form and choice of subjects suggest that buried within the heart of man lies the germ of his divinity, reflected

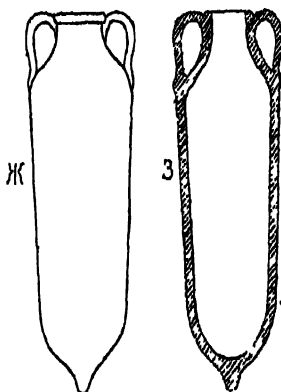
in the earthly life of Christ, the memorial crosses remind the passers-by of the transience of earthly things and of the spiritual life beyond. Therefore the antiquarian Souslov thinks that as death appears unexpectedly to men, the disposition of these crosses on the church walls is always arbitrary and irregular.

Vaults and arches were generally of finer stone than that employed for the walls, and sometimes where lightness was needed pots and urns were used with a facing of mortar—as in St. Vitale at Ravenna.

Pottery was also used but in quite a different manner, for those almost unique acoustic arrangements known as *golossniki*, or echometers, which are a peculiar feature of the old Russian churches. Stasov, who made a study of this rather obscure question, considers that they were probably borrowed with other details of ecclesiastical architecture from Byzantine sources; although there is no reference to *golossniki* in any accounts of contemporary Byzantine churches. No doubt, however, the musical sensibility of the ancient Greeks, especially as regards the human voice, was handed on to the Byzantines; moreover such an acoustic system as the *golossniki* imply would hardly have been originated by the primitive Russian builders of the XI. century. Its adoption proves how early the Russians began to study musical effects in their churches. For many years it was believed that this invention was only



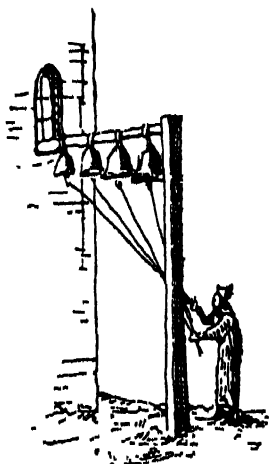
TYPES OF VOTIVE CROSSES  
THE LARGE ONE ON THE  
RIGHT IS DESCRIBED ON P. 21



ГОЛОСНИК (ECHOMETERS)



DEVELOPMENTS OF THE CUPOLA  
IN THE CHURCHES OF NOVGOROD



A PRIMITIVE BELFRY



to be found in Russia.\* In the Cathedral of St. Sophia at Novgorod there are three, probably the remains of many others scattered over the church and now destroyed or overlaid by heavy coatings of plaster. In churches of somewhat later date they are common. The *golossniki* are pots or urns, similar to those used in the construction of vaults, but laid horizontally with the orifices sideways. They are usually placed rather high in almost any part of the church except the east wall. The accompanying illustration facing page 22 gives an idea of their form and position.

The *Ikonostasis* was not a feature of the primitive Greek churches. In the old frescoes and miniatures the altar is shown separated from the body of the church by a simple low barrier. The high screen dates from about XIV. century, before which time the east end was elaborately decorated. The high *Ikonostasis* was probably built up by degrees: a row of pictures was affixed to the low altar rails; then a second and a third tier was added, until finally all that was formerly represented on the walls was transferred to the screen. The Royal Gates into the sanctuary then became double doors, sometimes finely carved and decorated with small pictures inset.

\* Stasov discussed the existence of *golossniki* outside Russia, with Viollet le Duc and Professor Ferguson, neither of whom could point to any example in their respective countries. A few years later he found that similar arrangements had been discovered in the church of St. Blaise, at Arles, and at Bjeresjo, in Sweden.

Bells must have been introduced into Russia almost simultaneously with the conversion of Vladimir and his people, since they were found among the ruins of the Church of the Tithes at Kiev. But they were rare in the XI. century and no special accommodation was made for them in the churches. They were simply hung on a wooden frame and struck with a hammer more often than pulled by a rope. A primitive type of bell-tower consisted of two arched openings, each containing a bell, covered by a single span roof. The belfry afterwards became a highly characteristic feature of Russian architecture, as will be seen when we reach the Moscow period.

There is not much to be said about the masonry of these early days apart from church architecture. Practically nothing is left of the old stone fortifications of Kiev. A ruined fortress still standing at Old Ladoga, in the north, attests to the solidity of the defences even before the invention of cannon. It has two round towers at the corners, set upon slightly sloping bases. A central tower is square, and another circular-fronted with rectangular sides. It is said to bear a general resemblance to the old Italian fortresses with their towers disposed at the corners and in the middle of their long frontages. For those who are interested, some details are available respecting the walls of Pskov and other ancient cities of Russia, but as the subject of military architecture has only a remote connection with my book, it is not desirable to pursue it further.

## CHAPTER II

### ARCHITECTURE

The rise of Vladimir and Souzdal. Influence of Lombardogothic style. Oriental influence. The grotesque. The early churches of Moscow. Influence of wooden architecture. Church of Vassily Blajenny. Church of St. John the Baptist at Tolchikov. Fortress Churches. Belfries.

**T**OWARDS the middle of the XII. century, as the glory of Kiev began to wane, the star of Souzdal rose upon the horizon of Russian history and there for a time we must look for the chief centre of enlightenment. Prince Youri Dolgoroukov (George of the Long Arm), son of Vladimir Monomakh, having striven in vain to obtain the principality of Kiev, withdrew to his domain of Souzdal and founded the towns of Yourievets-Polovsky and Periaslavl-Zaliesski, where he began to build churches and give an impulse to art which made the cities of Souzdal and Vladimir almost as famous in their time as those of Kiev, Novgorod and Pskov.

The Church of the Transfiguration, at Periaslavl-Zaliesski, erected by Youri Dolgoroukov about 1152, represents the transition between the styles of Kiev

and Vladimir-Souzdal. Although in its general plan it adheres to the traditional Byzantine, its material differs from that of the Kiev churches, being a local white stone. It is a simple edifice far less interesting than the Cathedral of the Assumption (Ouspensky Sabor) at Vladimir, originally founded by Prince Andrew Bogolioubov in 1160, and twice destroyed by fire before it became famous in the XIII. century as the church in which the grand Dukes were crowned, even after Moscow became the seat of government. There are features in this cathedral that recall the Lombard style. The Byzantine influence in northern Italy, particularly in the Adriatic regions, which prevailed in the VIII. and IX. centuries, gradually became intermingled with a barbaric element. The wave of iconoclasm which swept through the Eastern Church, leaving behind it a lasting repugnance to images "in stone, wood, or metal,"\* did not affect Italy, where grotesque decorations took a strong hold, especially in Lombardy, and travelled thence into Southern France, Switzerland, and the Rhine Provinces. Thence, in spite of ecclesiastical disapproval, they seem to have crept into Russia; for the churches of the Vladimir-Souzdal period, in which strange motives from the animal kingdom, and monstrous gargoyles began to appear, coincide with the fullest development of the Lombard architecture in the

\* The distinction drawn between statues and paintings, or carvings in low-relief is logical. The most ignorant peasant would hardly take a painting of the Virgin for the actual personality. It is the *idol* that is worshipped and therefore dangerous.

XII. century. The church of The Intercession of the Virgin (Pokrova) at the Convent of Bogolioubov in the Government of Vladimir (1165) shows some early examples of quaint Romanesque decoration on its S. façade. Over the entrance with its threefold rounded arches is a long narrow window; in the tympanum of the arches above is the figure of the Saviour, and on either side of Him a lion surmounted by a bird. Over the side windows are griffins fighting with strange quadrupeds. Below these carvings is a row of grotesque masks. Viollet le Duc\* emphasizes the Asiatic character of these decorations, pointing out that Russia was one of the highways of the Crusaders, and that in the XII. century there must have been frequent communication with Syria, which accounts for the likeness of one of the mouldings on the entrance porch to a design he had himself observed at Mondjeleia. Similar ornamentation is a feature of the Romanesque style, both Italian and German; but whether it was introduced into Russia from the west or the east, it soon became an integral part of the art of the Vladimir-Souzdal period. Another feature which we notice for the first time in the Church of The Intercession is the blind arcade of small columns running like a girdle round the centre of the façade.

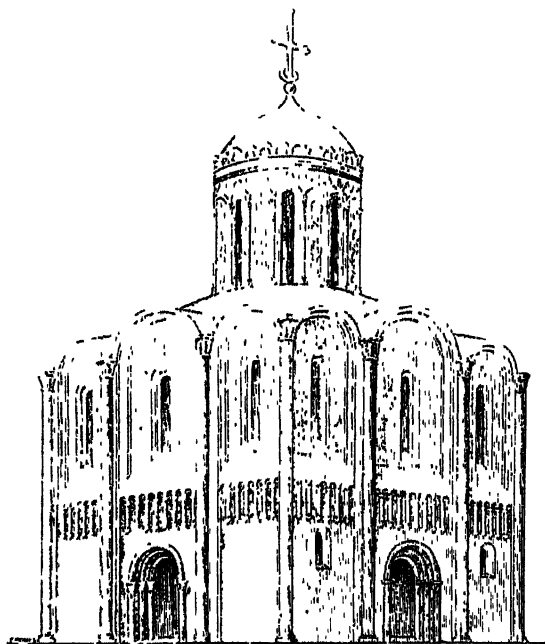
How profusely the Russian builders employed this kind of grotesque decoration may be seen in the

\* An interesting drawing of this church appears in his book, "L'Art Russe." Plate VI.

Cathedral of St. Dimitri at Vladimir, dating from the last years of the XII. century ; a striking edifice in white sandstone, which lent itself well to elaborate carving. Here, too, the building has an arcade running round the outer walls about half-way up. Above this, the whole of the upper part of the building is covered with carving on three sides of it. Each design occupies very exactly the surface of one block of stone, so that it looks as though the decorative work had been done before the stones were laid. The arcade is slender and elegant, surpassing in that respect the Rhenish work of the period. It is richly carved, the spaces between the columns being filled in with figures of haloed Saints with grotesque animals below. The archivolt of the principal doorway has five rows of moulding, each with a different design—foliage and fabulous creatures enmeshed with interlacing bandlets, strongly reminiscent of Persian and Indian art, and very closely allied to the Russian illuminated missals of that time. The Cathedral of Vladimir is the only church of that period which retains the old semi-circular or helmet-shaped covering in place of the bulbous cupola. The roofing should be observed, because afterwards the intervals between the arches, where snow and damp were apt to accumulate, were filled up and levelled beneath a straight cornice which served as a base for a higher sloping roof that often engulfed a portion of the drum of the cupola. In the XII. century lead and tin began to be used for covering roofs. The flat



"THE PALACE WITH GOLDEN ROOFS" (OLD RUSSIA)



CATHEDRAL OF ST. DMITRI, AT VIADIMIR



pilasters of the Byzantine style now gave place to tall semi-columns with Attic bases.

In general it may be said that with the Vladimir-Souzdal era buildings lost much of their Byzantine character, and began to assume a distinct style, which, in spite of its complex elements, can only be described as Russian.

We have followed the centres of artistic growth from south to north; from Kiev to Novgorod the Great, and eastward to Souzdal and Vladimir. The Tatar domination and the encroachments of the Livonians and the Poles helped to isolate Russia from the rest of Europe, and formed an atmosphere of unrest that seems singularly unfavourable to the progress of art. And yet it was precisely during these years of internecine strife that the scattered elements of culture gathered from the eastern and western worlds went into the melting pot, and came out to a great extent homogeneous and national. The Mongol Khans were not altogether inimical to the painters, builders and other craftsmen of Russia, to whom they even accorded some special privileges; but by keeping the country poor they hindered the progress of civilization.

The process of blending many influences into one style was not very rapid, but from the time that Simon the Proud (1340-1353) succeeded his father Ivan "Kalita" as ruler of Moscow, and adopted the title of "Prince of all the Russias," political and artistic unity may be said to coincide "Kalita" (the Purse-bearer) enclosed the wooded hill on which

the Kremlin now stands, and built the church of the Saviour in the Wood (*Spass na Boru*), the oldest monument existent in Moscow. It lies concealed in the heart of the historic palaces, just as once it lay embowered among the woods. The walls of the original building—they are of white stone such as we have seen in the Vladimir-Souzdal district—are still standing a few feet above the ground, showing that it was a small church planned in conformity with the architecture of that time. Ivan Kalita encouraged St. Sergius to found the famous Troitsa Monastery at Sergievo containing the Cathedral of the Trinity, which, together with the Church of The Assumption at Zvenigorod—probably also designed by disciples of St. Sergius—are two of the earliest monuments of Muscovite Russia. The latter edifice shows some remarkable deviations of style. The capitals and bases of the columns display great originality, and the pillars at the corners of the church are transformed into a sheaf of clustered shafts such as we associate with our own late Gothic work. The small columns of the portal are thickened round the middle which is probably borrowed from the wooden architecture, being a natural treatment of a round wooden post reduced in size at both ends. Ivan and his son Simon were enthusiastic builders, but the Tatar and Lithuanian incursions and the terrible fires in the Kremlin during the XIV. century undid much of their work.\* Nevertheless the extraordinary recuperative

\* In 1382, Toktamish ravaged Moscow and left scarcely a building intact,

power of the Russians showed itself then as it does now, and the passion for building flamed up again with Ivan III. (1462-1505), who may be said to have inaugurated a particular era in Russian art. His policy was to consolidate the power in Moscow at the expense of Novgorod and other possible rivals, Tver, Viatka, Perm, and eventually Pskov.

The first building connected with the ascendancy of Moscow is the Cathedral of the Annunciation (Blagovestchensky Sabor) in the Kremlin, which was erected by Ivan III. on the site of an older church. In 1484 the Grand Duke sent to Pskov for master builders to carry out the work. The ground plan keeps to the usual form, quadrilateral with three apses and four massive (square) piers, but the centre cupola is raised on superposed arches according to the custom of Pskov. Having direct communication with the adjoining palaces, the Cathedral became the Chapel Royal of the Tsars, in which they were married and their children baptized. With its covered staircase leading to the entrance, and also to a kind of cloister-gallery, decorated with frescoes, which encircles two sides of the church, its characteristic roof, and nine gleaming cupolas, it is far the most picturesque of the three ecclesiastical buildings which occupy the Sobornia Ploshchad within the Kremlin. Its structural interest lies in the fact that it unites the methods of Novgorod-Pskov with those of Vladimir-Souzdal, together with a few features of the wooden architecture that held the germ of a true racial and original art.

By 1472, the Cathedral of the Assumption (*Ousspensky Sabor*) built by Ivan Kalita, had become too small for the needs of the growing city of Moscow. The Metropolitan Philip collected money for its replacement, and employed two Muscovite architects to fulfil his plans. But the Moscow builders had not as yet acquired much technical experience, and the work proving unsatisfactory, Ivan III sent to Pskov for assistance. The cement was pronounced defective, and the new building insecure. Ivan's wife, Sophia Palæologus, who had been brought up in Italy, persuaded Ivan to procure the services of a Venetian architect, Aristotle Fioraventini, who consented to come to Russia for the salary—high in those days—of ten roubles a month. Fioraventini agreed with the builders from Pskov and recommended that the work should be begun afresh. It is significant, however, that the Italian was not given a free hand in the planning of the Cathedral. The original idea of taking the Ousspensky Sabor at Vladimir as a model was still adhered to, and Fioraventini despatched to that city in order to study it in detail. On his return to Moscow he built a kiln and instructed the Russians how to make better and larger bricks and stronger cement. At the same time he used chiefly the white sandstone of the Vladimir churches fastened with iron cramps. The principal deviations from the original model are the six piers (four of which are round) in place of the usual four, which was the cause or the result of the Cathedral being lengthened from

a square to an oblong, and the five apses instead of three as in the Vladimir Ousspensky Sabor. The present Ikonostasis was added in the XVII. century by the Patriarch Nikon, and the old sanctuary wall with its mural paintings still remains, though hidden behind the new screen. The cathedral has been twice restored : first after the Polish invasion of 1626, and again after the French occupation of Moscow in 1812. From the time of Ivan the Terrible it became the coronation place of the Tsars.

As we have already seen, the grotesque tendency of the Lombard style made itself felt in the Vladimir-Souzdal period long before the advent of Italian architects to Russia ; but following upon Aristotle Fioraventini other masters came to Moscow at the close of the XV. century, notably Aleviso, called also Friaszin ; and henceforward decorations in the style of the Italian Renaissance became increasingly frequent. Aleviso rebuilt the third of the Kremlin Cathedrals, dedicated to the Archangel Michael, originally erected by Ivan Kalita as a burial place for himself and his descendants. Externally it is a plain white-washed building, but the row of semi-circular arches which form the coping are filled in with a shell design such as may be seen in many a Florentine building of that period. The Monastery of the Miracles (Chudov) is another of the Kremlin buildings that shows in the decoration of its façade traces of a similar style, though its general plan is of the Vladimir type.

The smaller churches of this period seem to have been left entirely in the hands of Russian builders, and for this reason they are more interesting than the Cathedrals of the Kremlin.

In 1552, Ivan the Terrible, by the capture of Kazan, definitely broke the Tatar yoke, and in spite of the sufferings of the country under the rule of this capable and cruel tyrant, the people began to be sensible of a national existence. This tingling of the national life in the sluggish circulation of an oppressed nation showed itself in art by a decided tendency to create rather than to copy. The translation of the old wooden architecture, racy of the soil, into terms of masonry became more and more frequent. The Church of the Ascension, at Kolomenskoe, near Moscow (1552) is very different in style from the Russo-Byzantine and Lombardo-Russian edifices we have hitherto been considering. It is in the form of a Greek cross, and its twelve external walls are surrounded by an open roofed gallery. It has no interior piers; the roof of pointed vaults, rising in three tiers, is surmounted by an octagonal drum, with a narrow window in each facet. The drum is completed by a row of smaller ogival arches, two to each facet, and crowned by a tall "tent-shaped" spire ending in a little tower instead of a cupola. The general appearance of the church is that of a tower mounted upon an arcaded platform, the gallery being reached by broad flights of stairs. If we compared the Kolomenskoe church with the wooden building shown

opposite page 10 we should easily see the connecting links between them. Another less elegant but more fantastic church than the above, dedicated to The Beheading of St John the Baptist, is to be seen at Dyakovo, with a richly decorated façade, enclosed galleries, an octagon tower and four very quaint subordinate towers at the corners of the buildings. These two strikingly original churches may serve as examples that lead the way to that full-blown—or as some may think overblown—specimen of the genuine Russian style—the Church of the Intercession of the Virgin, more familiarly known as “Vassily Blajenny,”\* which stands in the Great Square at Moscow. This strange temple, fascinating yet repellent, was erected by Ivan the Terrible to commemorate the capture of Kazan. The name of the builder has not come down to us, but, whether a native or a foreigner, he must have been fully cognisant of all the peculiar methods and motives of the wooden architecture of Old Russia.

Vassily Blajenny strikes the eye and impresses itself on the memory of every visitor to Moscow. Fantastic as a Russian fairy-tale, monstrous as the abnormal being at whose command it came into existence, violent in design and colour, mysterious and furtive in its interior dispositions—it is the architectural embodiment of the period to which it belongs. Some writers hesitate to give it a soul ;

\* The church has no connection with St Basil the Great. It derives its popular name from the fact that it stands on the grave of a mendicant monk of whom Ivan stood in some awe.

and, remembering Ivan's favourite method of ridding himself of his enemies, it may well seem like the doomed bodies of half-a-dozen architectures, Byzantine, Gothic, Oriental, bound together in a grotesque and horrific sheaf. Undoubtedly to those who know nothing of "wooden Russia" it is hopelessly enigmatical: a kind of weird, rootless architectural toadstool, spawned in the corner of the vast Square, sprung perhaps from the blood which has too often saturated the soil around it.

Travellers to Russia in the XVII. century seemed less aghast at its sinister ostentation than those of a later day. Many considered it beautiful, and nearly all had the curious idea that it follows the traditions of the Temple of Solomon at Jerusalem. Foreigners, failing to assign it to any familiar style, criticize it—as once they criticized Russian music—as a formless, meaningless scheme of colours. Napoleon, in 1812, commanded General Lariboisière to destroy "that Mosque"; an order which was not carried out because it afforded convenient quarters just outside the Kremlin walls for a body of French soldiers. But to Russians who can link Vassily Blajenny to a long line of wooden ancestors, it appears less abnormal; less a law unto itself. The interesting researches of Kouznetsov prove that the original plan of the commemorative church consisted of eight separate buildings: seven wooden chapels surrounding a larger one in masonry\*. The central chapel is dedicated

\* This was the building erected in 1552, three years later the whole church was rebuilt in masonry. There are now eleven separate sections



CHURCH OF VASSILY BLAJENNY, MOSCOW



to the Virgin, and the remaining sections grouped, like satellites around it, are crowned by fantastic cupolas, each of a different design. One is in folds like a turban, another many-facetted like a huge roughly-cut gem, a third like a melon, a fourth a pine-apple, and so on. The whole of the interior vaulting shows externally and is picked out in various colours, red, white, yellow, and green, so that these semi-circles and pyramidal facets, shimmering in the sunshine give to the building a peculiar harlequin appearance. The church has undergone some changes, judging from XVII. century representations of it. The interior was decorated in the rococo style in 1773.

Vassily Blajenny is not a popular place of worship. It is difficult to imagine what form of prayer could be suitably uttered in its strange labyrinthine chapels ; an equivocal vow might be made, or a curse might be invoked there, but assuredly not a blessing

The "troubulous times" following on the death of Ivan the Terrible, the regency and reign of Boris Godounov, and the civil war stirred up by the False Dimitri, were not generally favourable to the progress of art, although Boris, like his predecessors, had the building passion, and enclosed a large part of Moscow within stone walls, built the palaces in the Kremlin, the fine church of The Assumption with its many golden cupolas, and the famous bell-tower of Ivan Veliki, about which I shall have more to say when I come to the subject of belfries in general.

A more fruitful period was that of Alexis Mikhailo-

vich (1613-1645) during which it is said that nearly three-quarters of the existing old churches of Moscow were built, while a vast number of provincial churches date from this time. The Church of The Virgin of Georgia, with its five central cupolas, attached to the Monastery of the Trinity, in the Kitai Gorod, is interesting as showing how the traditions of the wooden architecture were still maintained, and how, when the popular tent-shaped spires were forbidden by ecclesiastical authority,\* the builders still clung to this form of covering, although they transferred them from the central block to porches, corner towers and other less conspicuous places, so that we rarely find a XVII century church without one. A fine specimen of this period, though actually built by Alexis' successor, Feodor II., is the Church of the Nativity of the Virgin, beautifully planned and admirably typical of Russian architecture at its best. Speaking of the remarkable roof which covers one arm of the cruciform building, Viollet le Duc points out that here the method of superposed vaults, or "encorbelled" arches, as he calls them, assumes immense importance. "It would be impossible," he says, "to pass more skilfully from a solid base to the tower which crowns it. . . The perspective effect of this structure is striking, and the eye is led most adroitly upward from the square base of the

\* One reason assigned for this order appears in a letter from the Abbot Makary (1630) in which he says lofty churches are destroyed by lightning by God's command presumably to punish the presumption of the builders.

cylindrical drum, capped by a lofty pyramid raised on an octagon foundation."

One example of the provincial churches of the XVII. century can hardly be passed over ; the Church of St. John the Baptist (1671-1687), at Tolchikov, near Yaroslav, is remarkable for the richness of its ornamentation. Externally, coloured tiles play a great part in its decorative scheme. Tradition says that Dutch builders helped to construct this and other churches in Yaroslav, but certainly they did not influence the structural forms of the Russians, though they may have been responsible for the fine quality of the glazed bricks and the many tinted tiles—green, yellow, and cinnamon brown—some with quaint designs which are hardly Russian in style, which face the walls of several of these churches.

In the N.W. provinces of Russia we find fortress-churches of the type of St. John the Divine (1683) at Rostov, with four strong towers at the corners, very thick walls with embrasures, and entrances, the wooden doors of which were protected by heavy iron shields that could be let down by chains in case of necessity.

The elementary type of belfry, consisting of one or two open arches covered with a simple span roof, which I described earlier in the book, is found as late as the close of the XV. century ; but later lofty and elaborate bell towers become a characteristic feature of Russian architecture. In the transition stage the method of construction employed two square piers

(one of which contained a spiral staircase) joined by vaulting, and above this, upon a cornice, one or more tiers of open arches containing bells. More frequently three bells were hung in a row under three sheltering arches. Boris Godounov built one or two large belfries consisting of two tiers of openings, each tier containing three bells. The next improvement took the form of towers with the favourite tent-shaped roof, or detached galleries covered in with a double span roof. The first type shows its affinity with the old wooden forms. Since this style of roofing tended to deaden the sound it was soon pierced by one aperture, or "ear" as it was called. As we may see from the towers of Moscow, these openings increased in number, and in the form of windows, became the eyes as well as the ears of the belfries. The pyramidal roof was at first four-sided, but, influenced by the wooden architecture, this was exchanged for an octagonal spire rising from a square base. A very perfect form of this belfry may be seen in the Church of the Nativity and Flight (p. 38) which became the ideal model for innumerable bell-towers with certain modifications, the apertures in the spire increasing in number and size, so that the lower series are sometimes windows with two lights.

Besides these types, we observe the Russian love of high building expressing itself in soaring bell-towers, of which "Ivan Veliky," in the Moscow Kremlin, is the most famous example. Built by Boris Godounov in 1600, it rises in five storeys from a

broad octagon foundation to a height of 325 feet, each storey decreasing in circumference and being defined by a slightly projecting cornice. The last storey is cylindrical in shape and carries a gilded cupola surmounted by a tall cross. The ground floor is occupied by a small church; in the storey above is suspended the colossal bell of The Assumption, weighing 64 tons; over thirty bells of various calibre are hung in the floors above, and at the top of all are two crystal-toned silver bells, the music of which once heard remains an imperishable memory. Such bell-towers are fairly common in Russia. A bold and beautiful example is the one designed by Rastrelli the Younger, as late as 1769, for the Troitsa-Sergievo Monastery.

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## CHAPTER III

### DECORATION AND ICONOGRAPHY

Mosaics. Mural painting. Russian Painters supplant the Greeks. Iconography. The painters of Novgorod. Process of iconography. Moscow and the school in the Orovjenya Palace. The Stroganov School. The "Friajsky," or foreign style. Simon Oushakov. Miracle-working ikons. Influence of engraving upon iconography.

WITH the erection of the first Christian churches in Russia came the need for their embellishment. The early chronicles speak of the mosaics, frescoes and *ikons*, or sacred pictures, which decorated the Cathedral of Kiev, and fortunately there exists sufficient evidence to prove their statements. In the Cathedral of St. Sophia at Kiev, behind the altar, there is a striking mosaic of the Virgin, almost in the vaulting of what is known as "the Indestructible Wall." It is purely Byzantine in feeling, although it is less stiff and gloomily severe than the later Byzantine work. The background is of gold; the Virgin is represented standing upon a bordered carpet, her hands raised in benediction; a purple veil is thrown over her head and folded across her bosom; a voluminous *chiton* is encircled at the waist by a girdle in

which is tucked a fringed handkerchief ; on her feet are red shoes, the symbol of her royal rank. Below this is represented The Mystery of the Holy Eucharist, a mosaic with a good deal of movement and life in which the Disciples are approaching the altar in single file, where the Saviour attended by an angel is welcoming them. The Annunciation on the West side of the altar, the fragments on the heavy arches of the central cupola, and the figure of Christ on the concave surface of the dome, are all mosaics of unmistakable Byzantine workmanship. In the Zlatoverkho-Mikhailovsky church at Kiev there is, however, a mosaic, also representing the Holy Eucharist, which, in spite of its greyness and indifferent drawing, is interesting, because the inscription in ecclesiastical Slavonic proves it to be a very early specimen of Russian workmanship, and it shows touches of naturalism in the movements of the disproportionately tall figures which already distinguish it from the mosaics in the Cathedral of St Sophia.

In the old Russian churches frescoes soon began to predominate over mosaic-work as being a more rapid and less expensive method of decoration. The mural paintings by Greek artists within the old Cathedral at Kiev consist of scenes from the Apochryphal Gospels and pictures of saints, martyrs and prophets. The frescoes on the walls of the staircases leading to the galleries are secular in character, showing realistic scenes from the circus ; wild beasts, huntsmen, grooms chasing a horse, jugglers, and a

little orchestra of musicians with flute, cymbals, lute, and harp. In the Monastery of St. Cyril at Kiev there are some wall paintings believed to be the work of Russian artists.

Coming to the period when Novgorod the Great began to supplant Kiev as an artistic centre, we find that the earliest frescoes, those in St. Sophia of Novgorod, are, like the church itself, in the Byzantine style and undoubtedly carried out by painters of that school. The Church of St. George in Old Ladoga offers the first example of a whole building decorated by Russian artists. The paintings, left more or less intact after a disaster to the church in 1780, show the influence of the decadent Byzantine art. The figures are stiff, the faces of the saints are swarthy, lean and dry. That they are the work of native painters seems clear from the Slavonic inscriptions around or beneath them. On the south side of the altar there is a quaint picture of St. George, the patron saint of the church, mounted on a white horse, with a red cloak flowing in the breeze. Armed with a spear, the Knight is in the act of transfixing the Dragon which is looking languishingly at the fair Princess before proceeding to devour her. From the window of a palace in the background the King and Queen are watching the rescue of their daughter. The whole design might be a naïve illustration to one of the folk-tales.

In the church of Spasso-v'-Nereditsa there are some remarkable XII. century frescoes, including a re-

presentation of Prince Yaroslav, the Lawgiver, which may be regarded as the very earliest attempt at secular portraiture and the representation of Russian costume. The prince, who is offering to the enthroned Saviour the model of a church with one apse and a Byzantine cupola, is a characteristically Russian type, with a long white beard, a richly embroidered mantle and cap with a deep edging of fur. But while the subject is Russian, the treatment of this and other mural paintings of the XII. century have all the austerity, the anatomical incorrectness and general unloveliness of this late Byzantine period.

Let us now glance at the earliest specimens of Iconography.

Apart from the mosaic work and frescoes which adorned the churches of the great cities, it was necessary to have some portable form of pictures which could be used to assist the Christian propaganda in the more remote rural districts of Russia. The first sacred pictures were imported into the country from Byzantium, probably simultaneously with the introduction of Christianity at the close of the X. century. For two hundred years the Byzantine character prevailed, and although by the XI. century the first Greek masters who settled in S. Russia had found apt pupils in Olympya of Pechersk, Gregory, and others who helped to decorate the churches at Kiev, yet it can hardly be affirmed that there was a real school of native painters until the XII. century, when one was formed in the Palace

of the Bishop of Novgorod, and many ecclesiastics and monks in the monasteries of the district began to occupy themselves as painters. In a sense it was true missionary work, since the ikons remain to this day one of the chief methods of inculcating and holding men in the Christian faith. In the churches, the streets, the palace, the humblest homes, in the warehouse and the railway station—everywhere where the tide of human life reaches and penetrates—Russians are confronted with these reminders of “the hope that is in them” None can pass a day in total oblivion of the things of the spirit.

At first the importation of the Byzantine models could only spread slowly in accordance with geographical possibilities, since there were vast districts cut off from the few urban centres by miles of bogs and forests to which it was difficult to carry even the most primitive elements of civilisation. The ikons transported to such regions had to be small, and were often crowded with figures on the principle of *multum in parvo*. The original paintings were in themselves the work of a decadent school and usually degenerated still more in the hands of the unskilled copyists, so that the first germs of a religious art did not reach Russia under very favourable conditions. Nevertheless the genius of the people succeeded in giving some individuality to their decorative work, and would have accomplished far more but for the restrictions imposed by ecclesiastical authority.

At Novgorod, as at Kiev, the earliest ikons were

the productions of Greek painters, whose names occasionally occur in the chronicles of the time: Petrovits, who decorated the Church of the Virgin by the Gate in 1196, Theofan, called also Philosoph, and others. The Russians who studied with these iconographers merely copied their style in the first instance, but soon the whole art of Novgorod began to show a power and individuality which could hardly have grown out of the lifeless and decadent models presented to them by these Greek masters. As I have pointed out in the chapter dealing with the architecture of Novgorod, Scandinavian and German influences undoubtedly counted for something in the art of this city; but the natural vigour of the people and their happy immunity from the ravages of the Tatar horde were the chief factors in its superiority. "The more I study the ornament of Novgorod, the more I am struck with its *sheer originality*," Stasov once said to me as we were turning the pages of his monumental work on Slavonic ornament.\*

The XIII. century produced two or three famous Novgorodian painters such as Vyacheslav, who decorated the Church of the Forty Martyrs in 1227, and Alexander Petrov, whose chief work was the ikon of St. Nicholas in the Lipensky Monastery. In the XIV. century the chronicles mention that the Germans engaged the services of Novgorodian iconographers to paint a picture of The Saviour in their

\* L'Ornement Russe et Slav (French and Russian). Fol Petrotrad, 1887

church. According to tradition one of the best and most active artists of this period was Basil, Bishop of Novgorod, who painted the ikons of SS. Boris and Gleb in the Kremlin church of the little town which bears their names.

In the XV. century the chronicles refer to ikons painted on backgrounds of gold, but no painters are personally specified. Archbishop Makary, afterwards the Metropolitan of Moscow, is mentioned in the XVI. century as having taught the principles of iconography and painted many ikons, notably the picture of the Assumption in the Cathedral of that name in the Kremlin of the old capital, although some authorities attribute it to Peter, who founded the church in the XIV. century. Its clear, bright colour suggests that it may have been retouched by Makary, as it is known that he restored other pictures, such as the Vision of the Cross. At this period the art ceases to be for the most part anonymous, and the names of many iconographers are mentioned in contemporary documents. Shortly afterwards the Novgorod school lost its special characteristics and painting degenerated into what is known as the "friajsky" style.

D. A. Rovinsky, the greatest authority on Russian iconography, characterizes the distinctive signs of the Novgorod paintings at their best in the following words: "The design is clear cut; the lines are long and straight; the figure is usually short—seven to seven and a half heads in height; the face long, the

nose drooping a little over the mouth; the robes painted in two colours, or their various parts outlined in thick lines of black and white; the *ojiuky* or fine white lines round the eyes, on the forehead and nose, and also on the joints of the hands and feet—found also in other paintings—are one of the chief attributes of the Novgorod School; buildings are represented simply, roughly outlined by hand; hills are divided into squares and circles; gold in the robes, is laid on with a brush and sometimes the background of the ikon is overlaid with gold-leaf ”

There are three different schemes of colour, all of which appear to have been in use at the same time. In the first bluish green predominates; in the second we find rather dark tints, the flesh being a kind of cinnamon brown; in the third much yellow is used, often deepening to orange. Many examples of the first category are to be seen on the painted columns in the Cathedral of St. Sophia at Novgorod, where blue-green and vermilion are greatly used. Other paintings in the same buildings are remarkable for a complete lack of shadows; the faces being flat, tinted with dull bluish green and without *ojiuky* or expression marks of any kind.

Much less common is the dark, cinnamon-coloured scheme of colour, but it may be seen in the Cathedral of the Annunciation at Moscow in the series of works painted by artists from Pskov in 1554: “ God blessed the Seventh Day ”; “ The Only Begotten Son ”; “ Come, ye People, we worship the Three in One ”;

and "In the Tomb of the Flesh." Finally there are the ochre-tinted ikons which are numerous wherever the influence of the Novgorod school has made itself felt.

On the whole the Novgorod iconography adheres fairly closely to the Byzantine tradition, and the Novgorodian workers in this branch of ecclesiastical art show less independent initiative than in their architecture, illumination and metal work. The ikons of this period and locality have not the purity of colour or precision of touch that characterises the Byzantine painters.

The process of iconography, which was practically stereotyped, was as follows: the painter selected a wooden panel the required size and shape. Next he grooved it out a little for the background, and fixed slats across the back to prevent its shrinking. After this the panel was covered with a kind of liquid glue, and over that was laid a cement of which alabaster was a component part; it was then scraped smooth with a knife and polished with a rough fibrous plant known as "horse-tail." At a later date the panel was occasionally covered with canvas, on which several of layers of the plaster were laid. The studios of the master iconographers provided a few traditional models, and when it was desired to repeat one of these designs its outline was painted over with a compound of dried garlic, Chinese ink and vermilion or other strong colouring matter; a sheet of damped parchment or paper was pressed upon the surface of



IKON BY NIKOPHOROV  
(SCHOOL OF STROGANOV, LATE XVI CENTURY)



THE VIRGIN OF MOUROM  
(MOSCOW SCHOOL, XVI CENTURY)



the model picture, and as soon as it had received the necessary impression it was transferred to the prepared panel, and rubbed over the back with a burnisher or polished stone. In the case of an original design the painter sometimes drew it straight away upon the panel in pencil or Chinese ink. In the frescoes and larger pictures the outline was scratched and grooved out with a pointed implement, the process being called *grapheya*. The colours were thus kept distinct from each other. The trees and hills and other accessories of iconographic landscape were put in first, then the robes, and last of all the faces. Finally, the picture was treated with an oily varnish called *alif*.

In the XV. century we begin to see in the churches of Yaroslav mural paintings in which Scriptural scenes are depicted in Russian surroundings: such as the Pharisee and the Publican who are represented praying before an ikon of the Saviour in a Russian church, and this way of realising Biblical subjects became quite common in the XVI. and XVII. centuries. The churches of Yaroslav are very rich in frescoes, those in the cathedral of the Assumption date from the time of Ivan the Terrible (1563), and though obviously retouched some three centuries later, they have preserved the simple austerity of the old style. The Church of St. Ilya offers an example of an interior covered from end to end with mural decorations. On the walls of this building are inscribed the names of fifteen iconographers of note,

who took part in its adornment in the XVII. century. Many of these artists afterwards migrated to Moscow, where the Government was now consolidated and the demand for painters and skilled artisans was increasing rapidly. Here, too, we notice the marked influence of Western art, which probably reached the iconographers through the medium of engravings and resulted in a choice of subjects never before treated by the Russo-Byzantine school, such, for example, as Christ before Pilate. The tendency to include more or less secular subjects among church paintings—so marked in the frescoes of some of the Moscow churches—is also evident in the work in St. Ilya, which contains scenes from Byzantine history, and in the arch over the northern porch a genealogical tree of the Russian Tsars from St. Vladimir to Peter the Great and his half-brother Ivan.

Music and painting are now linked by the clear intention of the iconographers to represent on the walls ideas gleaned from the church chants and hymns. Novitsky points out an example of this in the decoration of the altar apse in the Cathedral of the Assumption at Vladimir, where the Virgin is shown in a Russian church surrounded by singers and supplicants amid the landscape of Paradise, which, he says, is an obvious attempt to translate into painting the old church hymn: "Because of thee O Blessed, shall all creation rejoice."

Of all the church decorations in Yaroslav those of St. John the Baptist (see p. 39) take pride of place

for their variety and originality. Painted by Dimitry Gregoriev and his assistants between 1694-1695 they combine a measure of respect for the old Byzantine traditions with a rare touch of audacity and realism which are truly Russian. The subjects are drawn from the Old and New Testaments ; from the Song of Songs, from the Lives of the Fathers, from the *Tsvetnaya Triod*\*—in short, from such varied sources as proclaim the painter to have been not merely a skilful iconographer, but a theologian well versed in the literature of the Orthodox Faith. "As a symbolic elucidation of the liturgy attributed to Gregory the Divine," says N. V. Pokrovsky, "there had been nothing like it before this time. These pictures bring before us the whole history of our ecclesiastical procedure, all the foundations of the Orthodox dogma and moral teaching, as in one vast didactic poem." Dmitri Gregoriev seems also to have borrowed some ideas from the *Limonarya*, a collection of edifying thoughts by eastern anchorites, in which the legendary element mingles with a lofty mystical sentiment, which was much read by pious people in seventeenth-century Russia.

When Moscow became the centre of government it also became the centre of attraction to all Russian genius. Here several schools of painting met and fused. Peter, the first Metropolitan, was himself an iconographer, and a picture called the Petrovsky Mother of God in the Cathedral of the Assumption in

\* The Flowery Triodion, an order of Service for Eastertide.

the Kremlin is attributed to him. The Grand Duke Simeon (1341-1353) employed both Greek and native artists to decorate the cathedrals and dwellings within the Kremlin. Early in the XIV century the Greek painter, Theofane, journeyed from Novgorod to Moscow, where he undertook the mural paintings in the Cathedral of the Annunciation. In this task he had the help of his renowned pupil Roubliev, whose work, the admiration of his contemporaries, is still highly valued by all connoisseurs of Russian iconography.

Roubliev—sometimes very erroneously styled the Russian Raphael—was not only a painter of some individuality, who managed to infuse a certain vitality into the monotonous routine of ecclesiastical art, but he was also a skilled and tactful restorer of the old frescoes. He must have been a most industrious worker, for his decorations in the Cathedral of the Assumption at Vladimir, and the Cathedral of the Trinity in the Sergievo Monastery would alone have occupied many years of his life. In the "Life of St Sergius" there is an illumination showing Roubliev painting in the Cathedral. He is at work, presumably retouching the picture of the Saviour "not made with hands."\* With his name is associated all that is best in iconography between the decadence of the Novgorod school and the rise of the so-called school of the Stroganovs.

\* There are in Russia several of these pictures which we can only compare with the Veronica and the miraculous image of Edessa.

Among the various authorities on this branch of art we find the following schools referred to from time to time : the Royal, or Tsarial school ; the Strogonov, the Village, the Monastic, and the *Friajsky* or foreign style. The first of these was a true school, or academy, located in the Oroujenia Palace (The Armoury, now known as the Treasury) in the Kremlin. Here the pupils were chosen from the most promising talents in Moscow or other cities. The students were divided into two classes : those who received a yearly salary and had satisfactorily passed a preliminary examination and proved themselves " neither drunkards, nor revellers, nor disobedient, but ever-ready," and a certain proportion who were fed and paid only " by the piece." On the completion of an important work all the painters received gifts in kind. Their first duties were the decoration of the Court-churches and chapels, the restoration of old ikons and the painting of new ones, and also any odd jobs which might need to be carried out in the domestic apartments of the Tsars and their children. The great monasteries, and the establishments of church dignitaries, had their own schools of iconography, and these artists were often summoned to Court to assist the Tsar's own painters when work had to be completed in a hurry. There appear also to have been municipal, or town painters, who were not a class set apart, but included even peasants in their ranks. Many monks made this their chief occupation. Among lay painters a whole family would sometimes be engaged

in this vocation, having their own studios in which they took private pupils. The work was highly specialized. There were groups of draughtsmen and designers; painters of faces only; painters of robes and architectural surroundings, and "herbage painters," whose business it was to put in trees, leaves, grasses, and landscape. There were also mural painters, master plasterers, colour-grinders, manipulators of gold-leaf and so on.

The Stroganovs, whose name is associated with another school of iconography, were a distinguished burgher family, who took part in the conquest of Siberia under the buccaneer leader, Yermak, in the reign of Ivan the Terrible. They soon acquired important trading concessions in the new country; and being of a pious and liberal tendency, they spent their wealth in founding churches, and commissioned numerous ikons for the decoration of them. So it came about that an immense number of pictures bear their family name as donors, and doubtless like other opulent merchants they may have employed their own iconographers; but the question whether Rovinsky was justified in writing of a Stroganov "school" with distinguishing styles and periods has given rise to much discussion among more recent authorities, several of whom think it unlikely that a simple burgher family, no matter how wealthy, would have been allowed to maintain a school of church painters which could vie with and even surpass the academy of "The Terrible" in the Oroujenya

Palace. Ikons in what is regarded as the peculiar Stroganov style are not confined to any one locality, but are met with all over Russia, and the most famous painters associated with them, such as Chirpin and Procopius are now proved to have spent most of their lives in the service of the Court school in the Oroujenya.

The close of the XVI. and the first half of the XVII. century was probably the most flourishing phase of Russian iconography. With the advent of that quietly progressive Tsar, Michael Feodorovich, foreign influence began to be directly felt in Moscow. Dutch and Danish painters were invited to paint the portraits of the royal family, and Petersen and Bouxters remained as teachers in the Oroujenya Palace. As a result, we find a small life school established there from 1643 onwards, in contra-distinction to the iconography. This art of painting from life (*живопис*) found many admirers and patrons, and the native painters, observing the prosperity of their foreign masters and rivals, were tempted more and more to introduce the new methods into their work. The *Friajsky*, or foreign, style, now took some ascendancy in ecclesiastical art. It marks a period of rapid transition, by no means always well-considered, but less crude and hasty than some of the developments to follow. The Tsar Michael died in 1645, and under his son and successor, Alexis, social progress became far more rapid, although its movements were not even yet marked by the dislocating violence which

characterized the reforms of Peter the Great. Under the steady but not intolerable pressure of western influence new conceptions of life came into being. They were the offspring of a natural alliance between Russian and foreign ideals. The commands of Alexis Mikhailovich breathed a spirit of enlightened tolerance. He formed the nucleus of a royal orchestra, and the first music drama heard in Russia was given at his Court \* He was a lover of beauty, whereas his son Peter was a lover of utility. The extraordinary number of ikons extant which date from this period testifies to the rapid increase in the circle of those who cared for art, and wished to possess some beautiful symbol of their faith. Not that the majority of the ecclesiastical paintings of this time can be called beautiful, judged by western standards of beauty, for the natural element is timidly and roughly grafted on to the traditional Russo-Byzantine root, and we constantly find ikons belonging to the second half of the XVII. century in which the old devotional austerity is lost, and nothing gained by a weak attempt to depict the Holy personages as people of flesh and blood.

Among the most remarkable painters of this period is Simon Oushakov, who looked upon his art from a lofty ethical point of view, and enriched many churches and monasteries with examples of his highly finished and conscientious work. The specimens of

\* For a further account of this intellectual and æsthetic awakening, see my volume "The Russian Opera," Herbert Jenkins, Ltd, London, 1914.

his style most easily accessible to tourists in Russia are The Annunciation, and the Vladimirsky Virgin with the Saints of Moscow, both in the Church of the Virgin of Georgia in the Kitai-Gorod at Moscow. The First, which bears the date 1659, consists of a central subject—The Annunciation—set among twenty smaller pictures, the themes of which are taken from the *Acaplista*, or Hymn of the Virgin. It is clearly representative of the iconography of the period, which still clings to the stiff and conventional representation of landscape—waves in symmetrical curls and vegetation of a purely decorative kind. It is devoid of atmosphere, the figures lying flat against a flat background, yet the monotony of the technical treatment is relieved by a certain boldness of design and vitality in the attitude of the figures that distinguish it plainly from the iconography of preceding centuries. Here, too, are touches of realism in the treatment of certain details, which convince us that Oushakov was not content to borrow wholesale from his predecessors. Some of his material may have been derived direct from nature, some from books and engravings—such, for example, as his views of Constantinople. Even more interesting from the national standpoint is the picture of the Virgin and Child with the Moscow Saints and celebrities: Tsar Ivan Danilovich, and the Metropolitan Peter, Alexis Mikhailovich, Kalita, and the Tsaritsa Maria Ilyinicha with her sons Alexis and Feodor. The background depicts the exterior of the Kremlin, with its towers

and crenelated walls, a church with five cupolas (The Cathedral of the Assumption), and some of the contemporary palaces. The picture of the Virgin is considered to be representative of all that is best in the newer type of iconography or "izography" as it is now more correctly termed. Oushakov died in 1686, at the age of sixty.

It must not be supposed that these innovations in style had been permitted to creep into ecclesiastical art unobserved and unopposed. With the final fall of Byzantium in the middle of the XV. century, and the establishment of an independent patriarchate in Moscow, in 1589, the links which bound Church art to the traditions of the school of Mount Athos were necessarily weakened. Yet there were many who still favoured the old style of painting and watched with jealous eyes the introduction of Western influences into iconography. The great fire in Moscow in 1547, which wrecked many churches and their treasures contributed, no doubt, to an infusion of fresh ideas into this art as well as into architecture; for not only were artists called up from the provinces to assist in the work of reparation, but Italy also furnished some architects and decorators at this juncture, and traces of Lombard and Umbrian influences are occasionally to be noted in contemporary ikons. It was at this time that Viskovaty raised a strong protest against the artists who forsook the old, authentic models and presumed to paint God "whom no man hath seen:" according to the in-

spiration of their own imagination. It was the scheme of decorations in the Cathedral of the Annunciation at Moscow which awakened Viskovaty's indignation. Not apparently those fantastic, naïve representations of Apocalyptic visions, of the story of Jonah (from which, perhaps, is derived the Bylny of Sadko) and of the Prophets, Patriarchs and Greek philosophers, which are now the delight of those who are interested in the "primitives" of every school of painting; but certain direct representations of the Deity, and of the Crucifixion, in which the cherubim were covering the body of our Lord with their wings. These he attacked as being tainted with Latinism. He found an opponent of weight and influence in the person of the priest Sylvester, the spiritual guide of Ivan the Terrible in his happier moments. This polemic led to the whole question being discussed in 1551 by the Council of the Stoglav,\* which, while advocating the moral supervision of the painters, left them fairly free in the matter of such innovations as were not actually opposed to Church teaching. At all times we find the moral life of the painter made a matter of serious consideration; he must be "sweet-tempered, quiet, pious, neither ribald nor garrulous, neither a drunkard nor a thief, but one who keeps soul and body pure," in other words: "a maker of pictures, a worker for God"

There was a great recrudescence of activity in the

\* So called from the publication of its resolutions in a book containing a hundred chapters (*sto*=a hundred, *glava*=a head or chapter).

world of art at this time, for, in addition to the destruction wrought by the fire mentioned above, on the initiative of the Metropolitan Makary a number of Russian saints were now canonized and for all these it was necessary to paint new ikons which were to be faithful portraits—as portraiture was understood in those days. In some instances it might be possible to find an authentic likeness taken of some saintly person during his life, or immediately after his death, and carefully preserved in the community of which he had been a member. Failing this his description might occur in contemporary chronicles, or “Lives,” or oral tradition, or the folk literature might be called in to assist. Occasionally dreams and visions supplied the unsubstantial material from which a likeness was reconstructed. It is certain that the iconographers were cultivated for their time, and knew what there was to know of Russian history through the chronicles, legends and folk lore.

When the *Friajsky* style became somewhat popular, it by no means entirely eclipsed the more severe, or as some prefer to call it the *monastic* style of painting. The two schools flourished side by side. In the strictest style of the later period only the hands and face of the saints are left uncovered, all the rest of the picture being enclosed with a gold or silver covering, richly chased and often set with precious stones of great value. The halos are of many forms, and generally stand out in relief. Some of these aureoles have plaques on which figures are represented,

others are merely the setting for gems. In such ikons the interest of the painting sinks to a secondary level. Most of the venerated miracle-working pictures are treated in this way, like the Virgin of Vladimir in the Cathedral of the Assumption, attributed to St Luke, the face of which, darkened by time, and possibly by the action of fire, is almost completely eclipsed in its gorgeous setting, while the great emerald gleaming above the brow of the Virgin is alone worth £10,000, the Iberian Mother of God, whose tiny chapel stands at the Voskressensky Gate, is another example of an honoured picture almost smothered by its splendid trappings. It is a copy of a XII century ikon in the Iberian Monastery at Mount Athos. On the right cheek is a scratch—reproduced in all copies of this picture—said to have been the work of an impious Tatar, who was converted when he saw with horror a drop of blood oozing from the wound.

There are many such pictures, but interesting as they are from the thaumaturgical point of view they have no direct influence upon the development of Russian art.

The influence of engraving upon religious art in Russia became very marked as communication with western Europe grew more frequent. By the close of the XV. century, Kiev had resumed considerable importance as a centre of learning. Peter Mogila founded the College of Kiev about 1631, but even previously to that date the city had been in advance of Moscow on account of its proximity to western cul-

ture, and in the south-west of Russia generally illustrated albums, and single engravings now became fairly common. Naturally these awakened the interest of the artists, and as they spread to Moscow and its districts they suggested fresh possibilities in the treatment of the stereotyped themes of iconography. The Russian painters can scarcely have been in a position to judge of the merits of the specimen of western art now brought to their notice; they probably could not distinguish the Flemish from the Italian masters, but they derived from them new ideals of beauty. An artistic unrest stirred the spirit of Simon Oushakov and of his followers. There appeared about this time the first æsthetic tract in Russia, in the form of a epistle from the izograph, Joseph to Oushakov himself, probably prompted by the latter, since it appears to be based upon a discussion which took place at his house, the meeting-ground of all the artists of that day. While firm in his Orthodoxy, the author defends beauty and nature as reflected in the religious pictures of other countries, and appeals to the authority of the Patriarch Nikon, who, he asserts, did not condemn a tendency to veracity in art, but only the inferior and inexact work of religious painters, Greek or Latin. The treatise is decidedly progressive, and above all it condemns the production of sacred pictures by mere artisans, which could but pervert the tastes and convictions of the uneducated masses. But the writer's desire for change goes far beyond that of the ecclesiastical

authority whom he cites as supporting his ideas. Nikon, while approving the moderate innovations of Oushaskov and his disciples, was a firm upholder of the Russo-Byzantine traditions, and utterly condemned all who kept in their chapels or houses ikons of "Frankish" tendency.\*

The complaints of Joseph as to the wretched quality of the ikons supplied to the peasantry and working classes were not without foundation. The people could only afford to buy the cheapest pictures, and to supply their demands the making of ikons was reduced to a trade. Whole villages were occupied in this work, two of which, Khaloui and Palekh, in the Souzdal district, have, up to the present time, retained their reputation for this industry. Philiminov, who has studied the work on the spot, calls Palekh "the heart-centre of Russian popular ikonography"; the work accomplished there is not devoid of vitality; while in other places commercial considerations have reduced the art to a manufacture; here the villagers work with conviction, and "while reflecting the old style, are prepared to make concessions in favour of Nature." While Khaloui is engaged in turning out cheap ikons for the masses, and the village of Mstera limits its work to the counterfeiting of the oldest and

\*Later on, during a visitation of the plague, a general holocaust was made by the patriarch Joachim of all "Latin and Lutheran" pictures on paper or cardboard in which the Holy Personages and saints were depicted "with fat faces" and "pink and white flesh tints." The robes of the Virgin were no longer to be bright and parti-coloured, but should resemble "the quiet, modest, sober-tinted garments" she doubtless wore in real life.

most "authentic" pictures for the special use of the Old Believers—and possibly also for the deception of guileless collectors—Palekh alone works for the love of it in the spirit of the old iconographers.

From the foregoing account it will be seen that Russian ecclesiastical art began to acquire some national features as early as the XIII. century, and that in the XIV. century the school of Novgorod showed remarkable activity, and produced works distinguished for breadth and vitality, and also for clear and luminous colouring. We are accustomed to look upon the old ikons as being invariably murky and dull. But the skilful restoration of some of the early examples proves that, relieved of their successive coatings of "alif," or varnish, and of some traces of unskilful retouching, these pictures often show a brightness and purity of colour such as might be expected from painters who understood the art of illumination, and had already some acquaintance with the richly and warmly tinted textile fabrics of the East.

Novgorod led the way in art until far into the XV. century, and had at least two highly gifted representatives: Roubliev and Dionysius, in whose hands iconography attained to considerable individual beauty, finish and grace. Pskov received an æsthetic impulse from Novgorod, and developed a style differing in some peculiarities of colouring. The early Muscovite style is less remarkable for breadth and touches of naturalism than that of Novgorod.

At the beginning of the XVI. century this school lost many of its qualities and the dryer, colder and more graphic style of Moscow took the ascendancy. As it drew further away from Byzantine tradition the Moscow school developed the national and popular elements. The so-called Stroganov school was a sixteenth century revival of the art of Novgorod, which had its origin in the districts colonized from that republican city, and gradually spread to other parts of Russia. At this period the taste for ornate design, the outcome of Oriental influence, makes itself felt in the church art. From the XVII century onward the schools of Moscow and Yaroslov became more and more affected by the western, or as it is frequently termed the "izographic" tendency.

During the XVIII. century several attempts were made to keep this art moving in the tracks of tradition. Peter the Great issued an *oukaz* in 1707, establishing a board of control under the presidency of the Metropolitan, Stephen Yavorsky, and a few years later a protest was made against the introduction of carved or moulded images, with the exception of crucifixes and the *panagia*, or crosses worn round the neck. But nothing could prevent the ecclesiastical art from being influenced, like the music and literature, by the tide of cosmopolitanism which set eastwards under the rule of Peter the Great. Iconography lost much of its national sentiment, and became a poor and stunted art, since it could neither maintain its old simple, austere—but devotional—

character, nor yet develop freely on new lines. The union of the old sentiment with modern technique which was eventually effected by Victor Vasnietsov did not take place until the second half of the XIX. century.

## CHAPTER IV

### ILLUMINATION. ENGRAVING

Ornamentation of early MSS. The Ostromir Gospels and the Miscellany of Svyatoslav. Pagan influences. Novgorod leads the way. National features. The Friajsky style. The Gennadiev Bible (1499). Woodcuts. Early Engravers. Engravers of the XIX. century.

THE art of illumination was carried to a high degree of excellence in Russia, and, from the greater freedom of imagination permitted to those who practised it, is in many respects a more interesting study than that of iconography or mural decoration. While the church painters were restricted to a few types which they might not vary in the case of pictures used as incentives to prayer, the illuminator, though more or less bound by the text of the Holy Scriptures and other devotional books which he illustrated, might make use in his work of many accessories not actually mentioned in the letter-press, provided they helped to elucidate its meaning. Moreover, there were various editions and commentaries, and the illuminators were not slow to take advantage of these variations in the text in order to gain greater liberty for their own inventive work.

Like the decorative painting, the illumination of manuscripts began under Byzantine guidance. Naturally a long period elapsed during which the unskilled Russian painters laboured more or less unsuccessfully to imitate the classic elegance of their models at their best. The result of this conflict between a well-intentioned desire to copy faithfully and a lack of technical capability resulted in much that was childish, crude and ugly. In the early Roman and Byzantine miniatures we notice the influence of the antique in those static types of figures in monochrome, often on a gold background, with no indication of a floor beneath the feet, which are merely transferences of sculptural form to a flat surface. Such suggestions of classic art found their way also into Russian iconography and illumination by way of Byzantium, but in the XI century they had often much deteriorated from the original models, and became still more disfigured at the hands of painters who understood nothing whatever of their classic significance. To the Byzantine element were gradually added others derived from the Bulgarians and Serbs, from Gothic sources, and directly from the East, and these elements combined with the exuberant fancy of the Russian artists produced in the Novgorodian style an art that was strongly original, audacious, highly coloured and grotesque; an art possessed of more character than beauty, but invariably vivid and interesting.

The most important early manuscripts preserved

in Russia are : " The Gospels of Ostromir " \* (1056-1057), " The Miscellany of Svyatoslav " † (1073) and " The Story of the Murder of Boris and Gleb." Stasov believes that the artists who embellished the first two manuscripts were not Greeks, but Slavs ; and bases his opinion on the forms and colouring of the capitals in the Ostromir Codex, in which there are daring and original variations, the like of which he never found in any Russian or Byzantine manuscripts of the IX. X. and XI. centuries. Still stronger evidence of Russian workmanship exists in the Miscellany compiled for the Grand Duke Svyatoslav, which contains a picture of the prince and all his family in the national costume of the period, one of the very earliest attempts at portraiture, and therefore of great historic value. Stasov also lays stress upon the human figures of the zodiac represented in this manuscript as having a distinctly Slavonic character.

Symbolism, allegory, and personification of abstract ideas, play an important part in old Russian art. A very beautiful Slavonic representation of the sun, for example, is found in the form of a young man's head, surrounded by a crown of light throwing off rays, the whole executed in pure red tints. The echoes of classic paganism, which lingered in the

\* Made by the deacon Gregory for Ostromir, Governor of Novgorod. It is adapted from the original of SS Cyril and Methodius. Once in the possession of the Cathedral of St Sophia, Novgorod, now in the Imperial Public Library, Petrograd.

† The French word *Recueil* is perhaps a more accurate equivalent for the Russian *Sbornik*.

Byzantine art are very strongly noticeable in the illuminated manuscripts of mediæval Russia. In a copy of the Gospels preserved in the Academy at Petrograd the initial letters, eleven in number, depict the whole scene of a heathen sacrifice. A priest, distinguished from the rest by the form of his head-gear, is about to kill the victim—a hare, which he holds suspended by its hind legs. In another letter a second priest is shown kneeling at the foot of a tree, and clasping its trunk in a religious ecstasy; a third has his hand upraised in an attitude of benediction. Besides these, there are men bearing votive offerings, and two figures executing a dance. This pagan tendency repeats itself constantly, proving how this branch of art escaped the vigilant censorship exercised over the iconography, and left the painter's imagination free play.

The earliest manuscripts were copied from the Palæo-Slavonic originals, the work of Bulgarians who, under the Tsar Simeon had already attained to a considerable degree of culture by the close of the X. century. The peculiarities of the Bulgarian designs were imitated by the first Russian illuminators; they gradually blended with other elements and assumed more original forms until the Russian *choudovistche* (teratological or grotesque) style became a fixed characteristic of Novgorodian art.

The principal components of this style are multitudinous straps, ribands, links and serpent-like interlacings; and fabulous creatures derived from human

or animal forms which have lost their natural appearance under the influence of conventional treatment. Both these elements are found in the Byzantine as well as the South Slav and Russian manuscripts. At first they were treated separately as distinct elements of design, but afterwards combined, first in the letters of the alphabet, and eventually by the Russians in capitals and vignettes. In the XII. century letters formed from the intertwining of snakes are very common. Typical examples are to be found in a manuscript of the Presbyter Gregory, preserved in the Imperial Public Library at Petrograd, which though written in the old Bulgar, or Palæo-Slavonic, bears evidences of Russian transcription. But though the grotesque now found its way into the initial letters, it is still absent in the miniatures, which continued to preserve the Byzantine traditions; so that if birds or animals are added here, they appear separately, placed on some salient outside the frame of the illumination. The Yourievsky Gospels (1120-1128) offer an excellent illustration of the transition from the purely Byzantine style of embellishment, with its geometrical floral designs, and almost architectural forms, to the quaint vigorous Romanesque, or grotesque, ornament which developed continuously in the illumination of Novgorod from the XII. to the XIV century. About a third of the initial letters are grotesques.

Another link between the XII. and XIV. centuries is found in the Roumiantsieff Gospels (1270), containing

many letters that foreshadow the rich and riotous ingenuity of the later style. This manuscript is a link not only in form, but in colour between the earlier and later periods of illumination. In the Yourievsky Gospels the decoration is chiefly in vermillion on a ground of white ; whereas in the XIV. century the white spaces were filled in with blue, green, and occasionally black, pigments, while light and rather gaudy colours were used, which were not to the taste of the earlier illuminators.

In the Yourievsky Gospels the designs stand out on red, blue, green and yellow fields, the use of yellow being a characteristic of these embellishments.

By the XIV century Russian illumination showed real independence and character. Most of the finest examples extant come from Novgorod, because, as I have already shown, this city was happily exempt from Tatar inroads, and preserved its antiquities better than most of the other centres of early culture. Geographically, too, it was remote from the southern districts, where Byzantine tradition had taken root, and was more accessible to western influences by reason of its proximity to Riga and the German coast. Therefore its origin was less directly Byzantine, and its subsequent influences more exotic than the art of the southern provinces. As Bouslaev says: " If Southern Slavonic ornament is an oriental off-shoot of the Byzantine style, the Novgorodian design of XII. to the XIV. century is a similar organic branch of the art of the Southern Slavs." He might have

included certain imported elements of Scandinavian and Gothic art.

While retaining traces of all these influences, Russian ornament and design assumed a specially national style during the XIV. century. The imagination of the illuminators ran riot in the grotesque, the further the manuscript departs from the precise and delicate workmanship of the Byzantine style, the more original, vigorous, whimsical and violent it becomes. This method of expression seems to link the religious art with the folk-lore, while in some instances we find links with the church music. The XIV. century marks the culminating point in the development of the teratological style. Fabulous creatures teem in the initials, piercing the frames with their heads and tails, serpents weave complex interlacings between floral and animal designs, churches now appear with cupolas in the Russian style, and are sometimes formed entirely of looped straps and ribands with crosses in vermilion, and it is noticeable that although the initial letter may be crowded with monster-forms, the illuminator seems to shrink from bringing them into close proximity with the church itself; griffins and basilisks abound, and occasionally a distorted human face, the forehead below, and the chin above, shows how completely the artist gave himself up to the capricious guidance of his fancy. Now and then a more spiritual note is introduced in the form of winged seraphim.

As regards colour, the delicate outlines are in

vermilion, and, where the figures are left white, they are touched with fine lines of yellow; black being also used for markings. Pale or sky blue is very usual for backgrounds; green or red is less frequent. A good deal of clear yellow pigment is used, taking the place of gold in jewelry and the garniture of robes, etc. The influence and duration of these designs upon the peasant embroideries provides material for an interesting study. The grotesque style prevailed more or less during the XV. century, when it gave way to the *Friajsky* or foreign style, a typical example of which is the Gennadiev Bible (1499), which, while showing traces of Byzantine influence, treats floral and foliate designs with greater freedom and naturalism, recalling some of the Sienese work of that period. Later on came a recrudescence of the Byzantine taste in Russia, which carried the illumination of the XVI. century far from the whimsical, characteristic art of the Novgorod school. In this century it became the fashion to imitate in illumination the *cloisonné* style of Byzantine enamel work, separating each colour definitely from its neighbour by means of an outline, so that the charm of tints blending naturally and harmoniously is quite lost; a style which compares badly with the free and living treatment of the floral designs in the Gennadiev Bible, where the pure bright pigments melt into each other, relieved by sharp touches of silver.

The introduction of printing and engraving gradually brought the history of illumination to an end in the second half of the XVI. century.

Woodcuts appeared in Russia about the same time as the first printed books issued from the press set up by Ivan the Terrible in 1568. This was much later than in other Slavonic countries, Cracow having printed books as early as 1491, and Vilna in 1525. This was not the fault of Ivan, who had tried to induce printers to visit Russia at the beginning of his reign, but they refused, deterred possibly by his evil reputation. In Russia, wood engraving was not cultivated as a separate art, but merely used to illustrate a limited number of religious books; the blocks were so scarce that it was customary to pass them from one printing house to another, so that the same pictures appear in various publications. The early woodcuts of Western Europe were often merely repetitions of the pictures which embellished the manuscripts in a more convenient medium for multiplication and distribution. They reflected the religious, political or satirical sentiments of the hour. The embellishments in the first printed volume published in Moscow, an *Apostol*, containing the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles, reflects the Renaissance style, while the figures are still Byzantine. In Russia no great representative of this art was forthcoming, though it was practised for a hundred and fifty years.

Copper engraving found its way to Russia nearly two hundred years after it was first introduced in Western Europe, and had reached an advanced stage in its development. In Europe it took its origin

from the *niello* work so beloved by the silversmiths of the middle ages. This "black" work had long been familiar to the Russians, as may be seen from XIV. century examples in the Troitsa-Sergievo Monastery, and St Sophia at Novgorod ; but the work took the form of plaques, decorations for vestments, and panagies, and never suggested the idea of its utility for the purpose of engraving. Copper plates were first used in Moscow in 1647, and the earliest one was engraved in Holland from a drawing by Gregory Blagoushin. The art was studied in the school of the Oroujenia Palace, and Simon Oushakov was the first great Russian engraver. Two separate engravings by him have been preserved. The Father and the Son enthroned above the cherubim, with the Holy Ghost in the form of a Dove fluttering above Them ; and "The Seven Deadly Sins," in which Satan is seated between two paniers on the back of a man who, fettered and blind-folded, is being driven straight into the flames of hell. The paniers are filled with animals symbolizing the seven deadly sins. Here Oushakov shows himself a greater draughtsman than in his pure iconography, unless, as seems probable the drawings were copied from some western engraver. Athanasius Troukhmensky, and his pupil Vassily Andreiev also carried this art to a high degree of excellence ; the latter has left a unique example of delicate work in a manuscript which is in microscopic script ; Leontius Bounin executed a series of pictures of the Passion from Dutch originals. All

were pupils of the School in the Oroujenia Palace. Superior to these was Tarassevich, whose "Lives of the Fathers of Pechersk" (1702) contains *eaux-fortes*, which are full of character and careful craftsmanship. His work approaches that of the best Dutch masters of the period, and Stassov believes he learnt the engraver's art from Kilian in the school of Augsburg. Galakhovsky also did some excellent work, especially a chapter-heading representing St. John the Evangelist, for the Kiev Gospels (1707).

The Society of Russian Etchers came into existence in Petrograd about the same time as the Society of Travelling Exhibitions. It was founded mainly by the exertions of A. I. Somov (b. 1830) and numbered among its members Shishkin, Gé, Baron Klodt, Savitsky, and many other artists who occupied themselves successfully with black and white work as well as painting. The Society issued a few separate engravings in 1871 under the title of "First Essays of the Russian Etchers." This was followed by "Memorials of Peter the Great," an Album (1874), and two short series of works from the annual Exhibition of the "Travellers." But the Etchers' Society only existed for about two years. Its most useful work lay less in the direction of publication than in the instruction it afforded to a number of artists, several of whom made their reputations as etchers, the most gifted being V. V. Maté (b. 1856).

## CHAPTER V

### PERIOD OF OFFICIAL ART

Art in the reigns of Peter the Great and the Empresses Anne and Elisabeth. Shouvalov founds the Academy of Fine Arts in 1757. Early Academicians. Brullov introduces some romantic elements into the pseudo-classic style. "The Last Day of Pompeii." Bruni. Markov. Architecture of this period. Neo-classic style replaced by the Rococo. Church of St. Saviour, Moscow. Witberg's mystical designs. Official nationalism of C. Tone. Return to "Wooden Russia." Hartman and others effect the renaissance of native architecture.

**D**URING the XVII. and XVIII. centuries exotic influences grew stronger in life and art. Peter the Great's marked preference for all that bore the stamp of western culture certainly hastened the development of the arts, but with the same kind of coercive impulsion that was hurrying the social existence, and the whole organisation of the State, towards alien ideals. Seeing that the chief pre-eminence of western art depended upon a mastery of drawing, he compelled the Typography of St. Petersburg to establish a regular school in which the pupils worked from nature. The emperor himself frequently visited the classes. His next step was to send off batches of youthful

artists to study abroad. The architects Oustinov and Korobov, and the painter Andrew Matveiev, were despatched to Holland; the brothers Nikitin to Italy; the engraver Korovin to France. In this way a decisive move was made towards the formation of a school of secular art.

While these Russians were studying abroad, Peter invited many foreign artists, chiefly architects, to assist in the building and adornment of his new capital on the Neva. Trezzini, Leblanc, Förster, Brandt, Munich, and the elder Rastrelli, were associated in this work. But this host of foreigners by no means fulfilled the expectations of the Emperor. Far from imparting their special knowledge to the Russians, they preferred to exploit it for their own personal benefit, and were willing to turn their hands to anything that brought in money. Thus the sculptor Rastrelli became a mechanician, and Tannhauer, the portrait painter, took to mending clocks.

Peter was better served by the young Russian, Michael Abramov. After having spent five years in Holland he returned to Moscow in 1702, and was appointed one of the clerks in the Oroujenia Palace. His zeal and quick intelligence attracted the Emperor's notice, and he was called to Petrograd and placed at the head of the Typography. Unlike many of the hireling shepherds whom Peter invited from abroad to lead his flock in the way he desired, Abramov was not only a conscientious public servant, but a patriot. He proposed to his imperial patron the

establishment of a separate school wholly devoted to the teaching of art; an idea which was shelved for the moment, Peter having in his mind the founding of an Academy of Sciences with a special branch for the fine Arts. This project was eventually carried out in 1726, but art took only a very modest place in the scheme. Abramov did not cease his efforts to remedy the comparative neglect of this branch of culture; but no steps were taken towards the establishment of a separate Academy during the life time of Peter the Great, or of his widow Catherine I.

Nor was the reign of the Empress Anne, surrounded by her coarse and greedy German courtiers, at all favourable to the development of the Arts. Her successor, Elisabeth (1741-1761), had at least some affection for her own country; but, having driven out the German element, her love of display and luxury caused her to replace it by an undue preponderance of French influences. Versailles was the model for the Court of St. Petersburg in her day; but her tastes and fancies, though somewhat superficial, led to some real progress in literature and art. Volkov opened a theatre at Yaroslav, the fame of which spread far and wide, and caused Elisabeth to invite him to transfer it to the capital, Shouvalov founded the first Russian university at Moscow, and Lomonosov laid the foundations of Russian as a literary language. The higher classes in Russia now began to develop new æsthetic requirements, and to hang their walls with other canvases than stiff and inferior family

portraits Pictures and decorations in the French style—the contemporary style of Boucher and Oudry—now became indispensable additions to all fashionable households But, because the native artists were still comparatively few, almost all the orders for the embellishment of the numerous luxurious and tasteless buildings in the new capital were placed in the hands of foreigners, who, for the most part took all they could get, and gave out very little to the Russians. Giuseppi Valeriani was somewhat of an exception, for during his fourteen years' activity in Petrograd he trained a few talented Russian pupils.

The next decisive step in the progress of art was taken in 1757, when the wealthy and enlightened patron of culture, Count Ivan Shouvalov, founded a separate Academy of Fine Arts. It had been his idea to open this institution in Moscow, where three years earlier he had established a university. But the project, which would probably have made a considerable difference to the evolution of national art in Russia, had to be abandoned, because the foreign professors invited to take important posts in the new Academy would not agree to live so far from Court patronage, and Court emoluments Shouvalov turned for advice as to his institution to the Academy of Arts in Paris, and invited some of its members to Petrograd The painter, Lorraine, and the sculptor, Nicolas François Gillet, were induced to accept the invitation, and a little later, on the appointment of several more professors, one Russian, Chevakinsky,

was included among them. The Academy flourished under the able direction of Kokorinov and Lossenko (1737-1773), and its position was still further strengthened in the reign of Catherine II, when, on the suggestion of her adviser Betsky, a preparatory school for children, largely drawn from the Foundling Hospital, was opened in connection with it, from among whom students of undoubted promise could afterwards be drawn. It also continued the practice of sending a selected number of pupils to complete their education abroad. But it will readily be understood that in this Academic drill-ground, anxious as its directors were to foster a veneration for foreign art among the Russians, little heed was paid to such germs of æsthetic taste as were already implanted in the people. The rulers of Russia in the XVIII century show this curious paradox : that though they held that spiritual salvation dwelt within the Eastern Church, they looked for intellectual salvation wholly to the West. The Academy like other organisations of the period was founded entirely on exotic and autocratic principles without regard to the life and customs of the people, and by the action of the directors themselves it remained for years a mere imitation of a French institution, without a trace of genuine national initiative. The students it turned out set to work without loss of time to supply the orders of the Court and the aristocracy for vast historical canvases, flattering portraits, and conventional landscapes in the style of David, Van Loo,

or Poussin. Yet amid all this colourless imitation of foreign models we find here and there slight indications of independent thought, even as early as the close of the XVII. century. These touches of individual and national feeling are less observable in the historical paintings of Lossenko and his pupils, P. I Sokolov (1753-1791) and Ivan Akimov (1754-1814), than in the landscapes of Stchedrin (1745-1804), Feodor Alexeiev (1753-1824), Feodor Mikhailovich Matveiev (1758-1826), and Andrew Martynov. In Lossenko's "Death of Abel" and Sokolov's "Mercury freeing Io from Argus," it is impossible to discern higher qualities than those of fair draughtsmanship and diligent study of classic examples. We are not surprised to learn that Lossenko painted his "Abel" while copying in the galleries at Rome, and his "Abraham preparing to sacrifice Isaac," while similarly engaged in Paris. Both these painters chose their subjects almost without exception from the Bible or the Greek mythology, which alone were supposed at that time to contain material sufficiently lofty to occupy the attention of a "master." The pictures of Egorov and Shebouiev are remarkable for a certain austere classicism of drawing and composition, and a careful finish, proving that they had studied fine models to good account; but there is a complete lack of originality; the former imitates Raphael, the latter worships Poussin.

Although after studying abroad, Stchedrin returned to live in Russia—he was the favourite painter of the

unfortunate Emperor, Paul Petrovich—the influence of his immediate surroundings was almost negligible. Like the majority of landscape painters at the end of the XVIII. century, he saw his own country through the eyes now of a Claude Lorraine, now of a Berchem, or a Pynacker. At this time landscape painting was reduced to something like a formula : massive foliage contrasted with a clear blue sky whereon a few golden-tinted clouds floated at orderly intervals ; rocks with an overhanging tree filled one side of the picture, a stretch of dull green sward occupied the other, on which a little pastoral scene could be enacted , the inevitable rainbow was somewhere in evidence, and a suggestion of distant hills enclosed the horizon. Even when the painter chose his subjects at home, like Andrew Martynov (1796-1826), whose pictures range from Siberia to the Crimea, the style of the classical landscape gives them all a singularly monotonous appearance.

Sylvester Stchedrin the younger (1791-1830), is considered by some connoisseurs to be the founder of a school of Russian landscape. The German critic, P. Muther, declares that Europe could not show the like in the first quarter of the XIX. century. While conceding his talent, it is impossible to agree with a judgment that places him above all his contemporaries not excepting Bertin and David Cox. Nor is his work important in the national sense ; for his most attractive pictures were painted in the neighbourhood of Sorrento.

Feodor Alexeiev (1753-1824) shows more audacity and initiative than his contemporaries. He has breadth and certainty of touch; his skies have depth, his clouds movement, in his treatment of buildings he attains striking effects of light and shade, and unquestionably foreshadows the realism of a later school. Alexeiev, who is sometimes called the Russian Canaletto, has painted a fine view of the Kremlin at Moscow, now in the Hermitage, Petrograd. His tentative naturalistic tendency was carried a stage further by Maxim N. Vorobiev (1787-1855). This artist, a man of considerable culture, was commissioned by Nicholas I, before he came to the throne to make a series of sketches of Moscow. Encouraged by their success he repeated these views many times, always with some improvements, particularly the insertion of vivacious human figures. Although he travelled in the Holy Land, and painted Jerusalem and the Dead Sea, he did not, like so many of his fellow-countrymen, transfer his memories of foreign lands to his pictures of Russia. His work is spirited, without any tendency to the grandiose, and his colouring is appropriate to the scenery he elects to paint. His most interesting work from the national point of view is, "A White Night in Petersburg," a mid-summer scene on the Neva. Vorobiev left several pupils, whose names will be met with again in these pages: Michael I. Lebediev (1812-1837), an artist of great promise, who died too young to do more than suggest that his bent was towards a simple and

realistic treatment of nature ; Baron Klodt, and the great marine painter, I. K. Aivazovsky.

At the close of the XVIII. century several Russian artists were engaged in portrait painting, in spite of the fact that they had serious rivals at Court in the persons of indifferent foreign painters, for it was considered more " modish " to sit to a French or Dutch than to a Russian artist. Alexis Petrovich Shabanov (1764-d. early in XIX. century), was, however, employed to paint Catherine the Great at the time of her journey to the Crimea, and Feodor Rokotov (1730-1810) pleased her so much with his two portraits in the fashionable style of Count Rotari, that she appointed him her court-painter. D. G. Levitsky (1730-1810) and Vladimir L. Borovikovsky (1757-1825) were perhaps the most distinguished portrait painters of their day. The former, who had practically no other vocation, achieved many likenesses that are sympathetic and intimate, but always show the sitter through the medium of the painter ; Borovikovsky, who painted some sacred pictures on a large scale, was only secondarily a portrait painter. He treats his subjects with greater objectivity and depth than Levitsky, and is a finer colourist. He painted very successfully the Emperor Paul I, and the Persian Prince, Kouli-Khan, but the greatest of his many portraits is that of the Exarch, Michael Dessnitsky, a picturesque figure, in his sacerdotal robes, a little unctuous and theatrical perhaps in pose—his fine dark eyes are turned to heaven, one large

well-shaped hand is spread out upon his bosom—but still a thing of splendour, deeply felt.

Orestes Kiprensky (1783-1835), much influenced by Vandyke, and Vassily A. Tropinin (1790-1857), have each left a totally different impression of their great contemporary, the poet, Poushkin. The first is sombre and rather inanimate. The poet, with folded arms, is swathed in a dark fur-trimmed cloak; his halo of crisp black hair and rather thick lips seem to accentuate the strain of "colour" which he inherited from his grandfather Hannibal, Peter the Great's negro. Tropinin's portrait may be flattered, but it is more romantic. Poushkin is represented with an open collar and loose necktie, in true Byronic style; his features are finer-drawn; his glance alert; we realise the enthusiastic and youthful poet—the creator of Onegin, Lensky and Tatiana, rather than the embittered and suspected pessimist of his last years.

Brullov's work as a portrait painter will be dealt with in my general sketch of this artist.

In the period I have just covered—roughly a century, from the foundation of the Academy of Arts in 1726, to the end of the first quarter of the XIX. century—painting and music in Russia both progressed slowly and timidly towards the national ideal. Schools of art had now spread to the provinces, and exhibitions became more frequent. In 1853 a circle of amateurs founded a class called The Society of the Lovers of Art, which developed into an art school and turned out many gifted pupils. Finally, when

Nicholas I. threw open the Hermitage collections to the public in 1852, a small space was set apart for the acknowledged representatives of the Russian "school." Until the middle of the last century, however, the chief stream of Russian art was persistently fed by western sources. Artists still continued to imitate French and Italian art, and more particularly the Bolognese School. But as the number of painters and musicians increased, and the love of art began to extend beyond the limited circle of the Court and the aristocracy, a yearning for more natural and national expression made itself felt. It was at this juncture that all society hailed the advent of Karl Pavlovich Brullov, and fell down in adoration before his "Last Days of Pompeii," lavishing upon it the same unstinted enthusiasm as was poured out a couple of years later upon Glinka's opera, "A Life for the Tsar."

Karl Brullov, for nearly half a century the idol of the Russian art world, was so delicate in his childhood that the first seven years of his life were spent in bed. Here he had no other amusement than painting and drawing; and, seeing that he showed some talent, his father gave him some elementary lessons. At ten, his health having improved, he was sent to the Academy school, where he made rapid progress and became a sort of oracle among his comrades, while his father cherished the most ambitious dreams for his future. He next went to Rome, where he spent some time copying the old masters, and painted for the Society for the Encouragement

of Artists—which paid the expenses of his sojourn abroad—two pictures: “Italy—Morning,” a young girl washing at a fountain, and “Italy—Midday,” in which a fat woman standing on a ladder is plucking a bunch of grapes. On being reproved for the choice of this model who showed “more good nature than elegance of figure,” he replied: “I find that correct forms all harmonize with each other (particularly in statuary, where these pure forms are indispensable); but in painting, the artist can get closer to nature by means of colour, perspective, light and shade, and has therefore some justification for abandoning conventional beauty of form; therefore I resolved to seek that presupposed variety in the simple and natural forms which we more frequently meet with, and which often give us more pleasure than the austere beauty of sculpture.” These words were considered new and courageous in 1828. Brullov having thus informed his patrons that the artist must be free to follow his own inclinations rather than the imitation of classical models, continued to work with feverish energy at every branch of his art. History, sacred and profane, allegory, mythology, the daily life of Italy, landscape—he drew on them all for the subjects of his pictures. Easily impressed, and in love with the first idea that presented itself, his friends began to fear lest his versatility might prove fatal to his reputation. Brullov, who was as handsome as he was talented, drew from Cammucini the remark that: “this

picturesque Russian is only great in little things." Nettled by this criticism, Brullov determined to produce a masterpiece which should answer his detractors once for all. At that time Pacini's opera "*L'ultimo giorno di Pompei*" was making a great sensation in Rome. Brullov had apparently seen it more than once when during a visit to Naples he went to see the ruins of the old city, and was fired with the desire to reproduce its tragic story on canvas. The result was a colossal and sensational picture in many respects redolent of operatic treatment. Its success, however, was commensurate with its size. Long before it left the artist's studio all Rome was gossiping about a masterpiece; and when it was exhibited at Milan public enthusiasm knew no bounds. Brullov was the idol of the hour; strangers raised their hats to him as he walked through the streets, and when he entered a theatre the whole audience rose to do honour to the "*maestro*." Sir Walter Scott sat an hour before the picture in ecstasy, and pronounced it to be "*a complete epic*." Italian art was then at a low ebb, and the very exaggerations and violences of Brullov's picture pleased a public, which had grown weary of the insipid pseudo-classicism of a Sabbatelli or a Cammacini. The picture was not received with the same blind admiration in France or Germany. In 1834 it was exhibited in Petrograd, first in one of the apartments of the Winter Palace, and then at the Academy. The journalists had already paved the way for its success



*Pinthe (K)*

THE LAST DAY OF POMPEII

*Alvanade III Museum Petros, 1902*



by quoting freely from Italian panegyrics. It is difficult to describe the adulation bestowed upon Brullov without laying oneself open to the charge of exaggeration. A few idolized musicians and actors may have been the recipients of equal homage, but there is no instance of any painter being worshipped to such a degree. Poushkin not only celebrated "The Last Day of Pompeii" in verse, but begged a sketch from the painter on bended knees, Koltsov offered him his poems; Glinka hailed him as a brother in art. At the Academy his influence henceforward outweighed that of all his colleagues. he became their dictator.

Brullov's influence lasted long; too long to be wholesome for Russian art. "For thirty years we have worshipped the inflated inanity of a Brullov," wrote Tourgeniev in the 'sixties. The reaction from such excessive admiration when it came was bound to be extreme. Stassov, who would have gladly made a holocaust of the unreckoned yards of canvas with which Brullov endowed his country, wrote of "The Last Day of Pompeii" that it reminded him of nothing more ideal than "a stampede of cattle frightened by a thunderstorm." It is certainly difficult for us to realize at the present time the enthusiasm evoked by this pompous and sensational picture. A couplet sung in its honour to the effect that—

"The last day of Pompeii has proved  
The first day for Russian art"

explains much. The nation was longing for repre-

sentation in painting and music. Before Glinka came it had already hailed one or two inferior composers as "founders of a Russian School" and by other equally imposing titles. The size, the movement, the panoramic effectiveness of Brullov's picture, and the praises of the Italian critics impressed a public ready to meet half-way an artist of Russian birth. Undoubtedly Brullov did something to break through the bonds of conventional tradition which impeded the growth of painting in Russia. He made an appeal to the emotions, and if he only succeeded in substituting a rather turgid romanticism for the false classicism of his predecessors, the fault lay partly in his period and training. Unhappily Brullov's gift was not of the kind which thrives in the rich soil of success. Although some of his pictures are more pleasing, because less pretentious, than this so-called masterpiece, he developed no further.

In his second historical picture, "The Death of Inez de Castro," the vehemence of "The Last Day of Pompeii" degenerates into sheer theatrical mannerism. In "The Siege of Pskov," a picture commissioned by the Emperor Nicholas I., Brullov was called upon to deal with a subject quite unsuited to his cosmopolitan interests and training. The picture hung on hand for some time, was repainted once or twice, and finally abandoned.

As far as one may judge of it in its unfinished state it would have been a cold and lifeless representation of a stirring scene in national history.

In his treatment of religious subjects Brullov scarcely rises above a close imitation of the art of the Italian decadence. His "Crucifixion," which he painted in a few weeks, working so assiduously that on one occasion he fainted from exhaustion, is considered his greatest sacred picture. The workmanship, shows no sign of haste. The lighting of the picture, which brings out in strong relief the body of the Saviour and the face of Mary Magdalene kneeling at His feet, is undeniably effective. One feels in this respect the influence of Caravaggio's "Death of the Virgin," just as one is sensible of the influence of Guido Reni in the sentimental countenances and melodramatic poses of the mourners grouped around the Cross. His "Assumption of the Virgin" is a retrograde step from the "Crucifixion." The regular beauty of the Virgin's features, the virtuosity of its composition and lighting, the fussy movements of the accompanying crowd of angels and cherubs, leave us unmoved.

Brullov's portraits are by far his most valuable contribution to art. Here he lays aside all pretentiousness and paints the living human being before his eyes simply and faithfully. Stassov, who, as we have seen, was no lenient judge of this artist's work, pays a generous tribute to his powers in this respect. "The more we look at Brullov's portraits the more they reveal to us their manifold truth and depth of observation. The variety of his portraits is astonishing. . . . Apparently the character of the

sitter, and the idiosyncracies of his nature dictated to Brullov the form, the pose, the movement to be expressed on the canvas, with the result that his portraits leave us with a mental impression of complete sincerity and actuality." Stassov could judge—as we cannot nowadays—of the value as likenesses of such thoughtful and sympathetic portraits as those of Prince A. N. Galitsin and the fabulist Krylov. His success in this branch of art seems to prove that, like so many Russians, he was a realist by temperament, but the victim of his time and circumstances which denaturalised him, trained him in an artificial school and encouraged the belief that only religious and historical subjects treated on a vast scale were worthy of the attention of a velvet-coated and picturesque 'maestro.' Too much attention has always been paid to Brullov in the history of Russian art, first in the form of unmerited adulation, and later in unmeasured abuse. His chief service to his fellow-countrymen was that he pointed the way to freer methods in art, although he was not strong enough to act as their leader on the new path opening out before them.

Brullov's contemporary, Feodor Antonovich Bruni (1801-1875) was another worshipper of the grandiose and the colossal. A disciple of Overbeck and Cornelius, he is quite negligible as an influence in national art. His chief works are "The Brazen Serpent," in the Hermitage, and the lifeless works which he carried out for St. Isaac's Cathedral, in Petrograd.

The decorations of this building and of the Cathedral of the Saviour employed several second-rate and wholly cosmopolitan native painters, such as P. V. Bassin (1793-1877), and A. T. Markov, whose painting of the Tri-Hypostatic God (Three Persons in One), for the great cupola of the latter building, shows certain imaginative and mystical qualities, more reminiscent of the old iconography than of the dominating German influence. Feodor Moller (1812-1875) was the superior of both these painters. In his picture "St. John preaching in the Isle of Patmos," there is passion and exuberant life in the interrupted Bacchanal, and dignity in the figure of the preacher. The effect of his eloquence is variously portrayed, but always with appropriate expression and gesture; one wild Bacchante has flung down her thyrsus and, stung by shame, has prostrated herself at the Evangelist's feet; another, insolent in her superb, carnal beauty, remains unmoved, and holds out to him with a mocking smile the cup of wine she has taken from her lips. The picture must have seemed an audacious protest against the immobility and insincerity of the school of Lossenko and Egorov.

As regards architecture in the XVIII. century the chief centre of its activity was the growing capital, St. Petersburg. This city rose into being like a strangely incongruous parterre in which a succession of gardeners have planted what they pleased. The Italian style of Trezzini soon lost its purity under the influence of climatic condition and German

taste. A kind of cold and heavy Protestantism next prevailed, which in its turn gave way to the French style, preferred by the Empress Elisabeth, not the style of the French Renaissance, but the lawless rococo which charmed and suited an aristocracy just beginning to assimilate, without much discrimination, the luxury and gaiety of western courts. Rastrelli and his son, Bartholomeo, were the chief representatives of this style. The latter was a veritable autocrat in the sphere of architecture. It was the ambition of all who built public edifices or private houses to have his assistance. He combined the old-established plan of Russian church with the *Baroque* style then in vogue in Western Europe, and brought a strong Catholic element into the ecclesiastical architecture. Some of his buildings are well balanced and dignified. The Winter Palace, the old Palace of Tsarkoe-Selo with its profusion of stucco ornamentation, the Smolny Convent\* (1748), the Stroganov and Sheremetiev Palaces and the Cathedral of St. Andrew the First-called, at Kiev, are good examples of his work. I have already mentioned his fine belfry in the Monastery of the Holy Trinity at Sergievo, and it may be added that he started a fashion for bell-towers on a grand scale, in which he was imitated by his disciple, Savva Chevakinsky. Of his contemporaries, Andrew Kvasov showed distinct signs of originality, but the

\* This was not completed until 1835, on the plans of Vassily Stassov, an architect of some note, and father of the famous art critic Vladimir Vassil'ich Stassov

work which he commenced at Tsarskoe-Selo having been replaced by the designs of Rastrelli, the Russian architect soon drifted into a subordinate position.

With the accession of Catherine the Great the Louis-Seize style found its way to Russia, where it was introduced by de la Motte and Rinaldi. At the same time one or two highly talented native architects came into prominence. Vassily Bajenov, who was commissioned to make plans for an entire alteration of the Kremlin at Moscow—a project which fortunately came to nothing—was an artist of strong individuality to whom is attributed the harmonious and pleasing Roumyantsiev Museum in the old capital. He formed at least one gifted pupil, Matthew Kazakov, whose work lay chiefly in Moscow, where he took part in the erection of many important buildings: the palaces of Petrovsky (burnt down by the French in 1812, and reconstructed in the same Lombardo-Gothic style in 1840), of Count Orlov, of Prince Demidov (afterwards the Orphanage); the house of the Metropolitan and the Archidiaconal residence near the Choudov Monastery in the Kremlin; also the churches of St Mark (near the Taganka), of SS Kosma and Damian (in the Pokrovka) and of St. Lazarus in the cemetery of that name. Ivan Starov (1743-1808) designed the Taurida Palace, which Catherine II. presented to Potemkin after the conquest of the Crimea, subsequently the home of the Douma, and the Cathedral of the Trinity in the Alexander Nevsky Monastery.

Side by side with these Russian architects worked Guarenghi, Rinaldi, and many other foreigners. The latter built the Marble Palace, laid out some of the fine quays, and prepared the first plans of the Cathedral of St. Isaac, Petrograd. But it cannot be said that any of the architects of this period—native or alien—showed the originality of Rastrelli, nor his tendency to modify the elements of a foreign style in accordance with the conditions and tastes of the Russian nation. Any architect who had ventured at this time to make use of distinctly national features into his work would have been mocked at as a barbarian. Guarenghi (1744-1817) introduced the Italian pseudo-classical style. At this time the "Quattro libri" of Palladio were translated into Russian, and helped to encourage this Italian tendency which had so deeply influenced English architecture a century earlier, when Inigo Jones was at the zenith of his fame. In Petrograd Guarenghi's chief works were the Catherine Institute, the Imperial Bank—in the form of a horse-shoe—the former residence of Prince Youssipov, in the Fontanka, and also several country houses including one at Panourovka, which is an exact copy of the Villa Valmarone at Vicenza. Charles Cameron, a favourite architect of Catherine II, was distinguished for his delicate decorative designs; the Chinese Kiosk and Village in the Park of Tsarskoe-Selo were designed by him. Voronikhin (1754-1813) was the architect of the Kazan Cathedral at Petrograd, with its semi-circle of Corinthian pillars; a poor

copy of St. Peter's at Rome, but built in this style at the desire of the Grand Duke, Paul Petrovich, who had conceived an immense admiration for the latter edifice, and wished to see something similar in his own capital.

Great interest centred around the project of building a Cathedral in Moscow to commemorate the salvation of Russia from the consequences of the French invasion in 1812. The first open competition for the plans of the Cathedral of the Saviour was held in 1816, but nothing was forthcoming that satisfied the mystical tendencies of the Emperor Alexander I. At that time a painter residing in Moscow, Carl L. Witberg (1787-1855), a follower of Labzin, a seer of visions, declared that "the daughter of Truth" had appeared to him and conversed with him on the subject. He found influential supporters, among them, Count Rastopchin, Minister of Education, and Prince A. N. Galitsin. The fact that Witberg knew nothing of architecture did not prevent them from entrusting him with several million roubles. It was proposed to erect the temple of thanksgiving upon the Sparrow Hill just outside Moscow. The designs were made upon a mystical basis, in accordance with the words of St. Paul "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" The building was to consist of three storeys, corresponding with the elements which go to make up man. The first, or "corporeal" storey, was to be a parallelogram, and to consist of cata-

combs, the second was "the temple of the soul" which was to take the form of a cross, "because the cross was apposite to the soul"; the highest floor was "the temple of the spirit," which was circular, and emblematic of eternity. The idea does not seem so far fetched to us in the present day, when a tendency to mystical thought is everywhere at work; moreover in the hands of a great and highly imaginative genius it might possibly have evolved into a symbolical building of some beauty and significance. Witberg's drawing of the finished edifice is, however, unimpressive, and resembles the super-imposed layers of a triple wedding-cake rather than the visible embodiment of man's threefold nature. "Mother Moscow" may be grateful that she was spared this excrescence at the foot of the pretty wooded hill where all the town betakes itself on fine Sunday afternoons. The project, lightly entered upon, ended in tragedy. The unfortunate architect was accused of falsifying his accounts, tried and banished to Vyatka. The mystical dreamer was certainly not well suited to deal with the large sums of money thoughtlessly placed in his hands; but there seems no doubt that, though careless, he was to a great extent the victim of Court intrigues. In Vyatka he built the Church of St. Alexander Nevsky. While living in this town he made the acquaintance of a fellow exile, the socialist philosopher, Alexander Herzen, who, moved by what he considered the undeserved sufferings of Witberg, took up the pen on

his behalf, and wrote of him not merely as the blameless victim of unscrupulous rivals, but as a very great talent thrown away upon a frivolous age. Herzen's championship gave a fictitious value to Witberg's artistic powers ; judging, however, by pictures painted before he took to architecture he seems to have been an academic nonentity.

The building of the Church of the Saviour, begun in 1817, hung on hand for some years before it was finally abandoned. The project was revived by Nicholas I., who commanded Constantine A. Tone (1794-1881) to prepare the new plans. The Emperor having expressed a wish that these designs should depart from the usual imitations of western architecture, and be more in conformity with the traditions of the Orthodox Church, Tone followed the Russo-Byzantine lines in so far that he designed a church with five cupolas. But as one swallow does not make a summer, neither do five cupolas necessarily make a Russo-Byzantine church. It is difficult to understand how he came to be looked upon officially as the originator of a new national style. Only a generation bred up in Petrograd in ignorance of the true traditions of Russian architecture could have been satisfied to accept this superficial revival of a few of its features as an effective renaissance. Never was art in Russia subjected to such a well-intentioned fussy, arbitrary patronage as at this moment. After nearly a century and a half's complete neglect of the national tastes and capacities, it was thought that a native art

could be called into existence by protocol. Stassov used to say sarcastically that Tone's "national churches" were worthy to be classed with Lvov's "national hymn." He was simply one of the "official talents" of that day, whose artistic convictions permitted them to build, paint, or compose, in whatever style was indicated to them. Of one of these, a writer of tragedies, Glinka remarks rather brutally in his diary, "a poet to-day, he would be an *accoucheur* to-morrow if he received an official command to that effect."

The Church of the Saviour was completed in 1883. It cost—as the guide books impress upon us—over fifteen million roubles, and, within and without, nothing has been spared to make it "the finest church in Moscow." But compared, for example, with the Church of the Nativity and Flight it is like an over-dressed parvenue venturing into the same room with a princess of the blood. Tone was also responsible for the New—or Great-Palace in the Kremlin; and here again the building has no genuine Russian feeling, in spite of a wealth of external decoration based on a few oft-repeated national motives. This architect may be said to have substituted the false-Byzantine for the pseudo-classic style.

The French architect, de Monferrand, was engaged upon the new Cathedral of St. Isaac, Petrograd, during the reign of Nicholas I. Begun in 1819 it was completed in 1858. Considered apart from the

costliness of its materials, the richness of its decorations, and the spaciousness of its plans, it is only an indifferent copy of the Pantheon in Paris, and has no significance for Russian architecture. Nor is it necessary to enlarge upon the influence of the Germans, Shinkel of Berlin, and Klenz of Munich, since their activity consisted merely in repeating in Petrograd the same kind of architectural blots which mar the appearance of these German capitals. Rossi (1775-1849), who built the new Mikhailovsky Palace, the Alexander Theatre, and the War Office, revived for a short time the interest in the fast-expiring "Empire" style. Until the middle of the XIX. century the pseudo-classic taste may be said to have prevailed so exclusively that whole streets—such as the Nevsky Prospect—still had the appearance of being thought out and designed by one man.

After 1850 a change was gradually wrought in the architecture of Russia. "We might imagine," says Stassov, "that a whole century separates the architecture of the reign of Nicholas I. from that of Alexander II." It was not merely the architecture of churches and public buildings that had been restricted to these artificial neo-classical forms. Domestic architecture had suffered even more. Abodes of gloom, dark internally, their fronts heavy with columns, Greek vases, and other inappropriate decorations, abounded in Petrograd, recalling Pope's famous lines:—

. . . 'tis very fine,  
But where d' ye sleep, or where d' ye dine.

Later on, the city began to show dwellings in the Renaissance and Rococo styles, rather fantastic and unsuitable, perhaps, but still comfortable and cheerful. Makarov, Kitner, Rakhau, who excelled in the Louis—Seize style, were the leaders of this movement. But though domestic architecture became less forbidding and pretentious, it remained—and to some extent still remains—under exotic influence. But the Russians, as we may learn from the time of Peter the Great, have always clung obstinately to the customs and traditions rooted in their national life. Here and there the tendencies that were expressing themselves in painting through Perov, Repin, and Shishkin, and in music through Balakirev, Borodin and Moussorgsky, began to show themselves in domestic architecture. One of the pioneers of the national renaissance was A. M. Gornostaev (1804-1862), a professor at the Academy, whose earlier buildings were quite cosmopolitan in character. Being requested by the Superiors of the Monasteries of Sergievo-Poustiny (near Petrograd) and Valaam, on Lake Ladoga, to carry out their commissions in the Russian style, he turned his attention to national features, and produced a picturesque basilica church for the first, and two churches for the second, community. The clock tower of the Gostinny Dvor in Petrograd was also his design.

David Grimm followed in Gornostaev's footsteps, making, however, a special study of the architecture of the South. His "*Monuments d'Architecture By-*

zantine en Géorgie et en Arménie" is a standard authority. The influence of this branch of Byzantine architecture is evident in his work. The church, which he built in the Khersonesus to commemorate the Baptism of the Russian Folk, and the Cathedral of the Caucasian Army at Tiflis (in the Georgian style) are considered two fine examples of this revival of the Byzantine tradition.

At the Paris Exhibitions of 1867, 1873 and 1878, the buildings in the Russian style were greatly admired for their originality. The birth of the Russian realistic school of *genre* painting and the regenerated architecture were practically contemporary; but it was the latter that made the most impression on foreigners, because it had so little in common with western forms. Towards the end of the reign of Nicholas I there was a feverish activity in the direction of studying and preserving all the foundations of the national life. Dozens of books appeared dealing with archæology, the folk-tales and the folk-music. "Antiquities of the Russian Empire," with many illustrations by Solntsiév, led the way, and henceforward it was impossible for Russian architects in search of national "motives" to produce such shoddy decorative effects as those of Tone. They learnt, too, from buildings more than they could learn from books, and instead of going to Paris or Munich to pick up the architectural fashions, they now visited the old centres of church architecture at home—Novgorod, Vladimir, Yaroslav—and studied

the survivals of "wooden Russia" to good purpose. Herein lies the great difference between the Russian school of modern architecture and those of other countries. For centuries masonry has been practically the sole building material of western Europe. The wooden chalets of Switzerland and the Black Forest still survive, but they are monotonous in style and impermanent in construction, and cannot compare in size or complexity to the timber buildings which have always continued to exist side by side with stone edifices in Russia. Moreover, wood must remain for centuries to come the building material of the *dacha*, or country house, and of the rural church. Therefore if characteristic form is to be considered—and without it timber constructions soon degenerate into mere shelters—it will always be necessary to have architects who make a special study of this branch of the profession. That wood lends itself to very original effects and endless variety of colouring has been already shown in these pages.

At the Moscow Exhibition of 1872 Victor Alexandrovich Hartman (1834-1873) aroused great interest by his buildings for the Military Section, and also for the National Theatre in the grounds of the Exhibition. These were bold attempts to revive the old Russian style of timber architecture. Still more daring was his project for a Gateway into the city of Kiev, which was never erected. The typography which he built for A. I. Mamantov in Moscow (1872), is one of the few existing examples of the work of this very

gifted artist. Here an effective use of coloured tiles and bricks revived a custom of the XVII century\* that was afterwards followed up by Pazdeiev in the very striking Igoumovsky Dom, in Moscow, which was designed by him. Although Hartman's entrance to the Mamantov Typography is at a first glance as fantastic and as inconsequent as the architecture of Vassily Blajenny, and might be attributed by a stranger to some Indo-Saracenic influence, it is in reality a logical development of some of the earlier forms of the Russian timber building. Hartman was regarded as a genius by his contemporaries, and his personality endeared him to many of the most interesting men of his day. I have often heard Stasov bewail his early death as a serious loss to the national movement. His pencil and water-colour sketches were full of vitality, and when they were exhibited in 1874, the year after Hartman died, they inspired his friend Moussorgsky to translate a series of them into terms of music. Few of Hartman's designs were actually realised in timber or masonry.

Ivan Pavlovich Ropets, Hartman's junior by ten years, planned the Russian sections for the Paris Exhibition of 1878, and also for the Copenhagen and Chicago Exhibitions. Less imaginative—and certainly less eccentric—than Hartman, he showed nevertheless in the designs for these buildings, and also in the hall which he built for the theatre in the great camp at Krasnoselsk, that he had a deep knowledge of, and

\*See p. 39, the Church of St. John the Baptist, at Tolchikov.

sympathy with, the quaint ideas of the mediæval workers in wood. His pupil Valberg, who died in 1881, was a young man of brilliant promise devoted to the revival of the old national forms. These three architects were pre-eminently the modern representatives of "wooden Russia."

The concert hall in the Hotel "Slavyansky Bazar" in Moscow, was one of the many results of the national enthusiasm of the 'seventies. It is the work of Houn and Kondryavets. Its many-coloured columns, its carved and painted cornice, and gay tiles, are all in the old Russian style. Bogomolov (1844-1886), who first co-operated with Valberg, and afterwards with Kharlamov, was another gitted revivalist of the archaic forms. He built a very interesting wooden church and *campanile* on the estate of the Grand Duke Nicholas Nicholævich at Znamenka, another, with a tent-shaped roof, at Raivolova, and two admirable private dwellings—the Dom Zaitsev in Petrograd and Dom Korzinkin in Moscow.\* The style of Professor Ryazonov (1817-1887) was a compromise between the purely Russian and the western European. Recalled from making a special study of the Cathedral of Orvieto, in 1863, he was engaged in the general restoration of the Orthodox churches in Poland, following on the revolution. He also built a palace for the Grand Duke Vladimir Alexandrovich, which was decorated and furnished in the national style.

\* In Russia a house usually takes the name of the owner for whom it has been built, *i.e.*, House Johnson, or House Williams

Another architect whose work is only quasi-national, A. W. Pomerantsiev, built the new Gostinny Dvor opposite the Kremlin in Moscow, and several other new erections in the old capital, rather offensive to those who are attached to the forms and spirit of the past.

A fine example of the Russian renaissance in Petrograd, and one which is easily accessible to strangers visiting the capital is the Dom Bassin\* in the Square of the Alexander Theatre, by Nicholas Nikonov. This picturesque façade with its rows of windows in the old Russian style—three lights, of which the middle one rises above the others—its short columns thickened in the centre, and its clear-cut cornices, charms by the relief and contrast which it affords. It should be seen on a bright day when mysterious depths of shadow contrast sharply with the high lights upon its salient decorative features. The house is crowned by low cupolas of very original design.

I have been able to cite only a few of the most remarkable buildings which arose out of the national movement of the 'seventies and 'eighties. Examples abound, although many of them make compromises with east and west, for this tendency met with as much opposition in architecture as it did in music, and architecture has its Rubinsteins and Tchaikovskys as well as its Moussorgskys and Borodins. We find the same opprobrious terms: "barbarous,"

\* The ground floor is now occupied as a bookshop

"crude," "bizarre," "naïve," "uncultured," that were so freely applied to the music of "the Mighty Five"\* heaped upon the work of Hartman, Ropets, or Bogomolov, by contemporary critics. But the battle of nationality *v.* cosmopolitanism was fought and won in architecture as in the other arts, and Russian motives in building and decoration became as general as the folk-song theme in music. To the traveller in Russia who desires to penetrate deeply into the spirit of the race there is no better text-book than that which the architecture affords him. The capital cities may appear at first sight paradoxical, complex, and bewildering; but in the old provincial towns and the rural districts may be found the key which unlocks the secret of Russia's fascination.

\* Balakirev, Cui, Borodin, Moussorgsky, and Rimsky-Korsakov the chief representatives of the national school of music in Russia

## CHAPTER VI

### PAINTING. DAWN OF REALISM

Ivanov, the precursor of realism. His "Christ appearing to the Nations" is misunderstood by his generation. Literary influences and the genre painters. Venetsianov. Fedotov. Perov founds a didactic school. Perov and Moussorgsky. The seceders from the Academy form the Society of Travelling Exhibitions. Champions of realism and nationality. Pryanichnikov. Savitsky. Yaroshenko. Maximov. Impressionist influence on Arkhipov, Bogdanov-Bielsky and others. Reactionary tendency from the didactic school.

THE true precursor of realism in Russian art was Alexander Andreievich Ivanov (1806-1858) "With Brullov, says Novitsky, "came the close of the old tendency; with Ivanov the beginning of a new one." His early history is very similar to that of his more successful contemporary. He, too, came of an artistic family, and, having passed through the Academy School, was sent to study in Rome. Of a rather timid and vacillating disposition Ivanov found it difficult at first to resist the paramount influence of the "Nazarenes" with Overbeck at their head; although his tastes and sensibilities attracted him far more to the study of Raphael, Titian and Leonardo da Vinci. For

a long time he hesitated in his choice of a subject for a masterpiece, and many Biblical and mythological themes were passed in review before he decided upon "Christ appearing to the Nations," on which he was destined to spend over twenty years of assiduous work. First of all, however, he tried his strength upon a less ambitious and smaller canvas: "Christ appearing to Mary Magdalen." The original sketch for the former picture, together with the immense number of studies and pencil notes which he accumulated while working upon it, are preserved in the Tretyakov Gallery at Moscow; so that it is possible to follow the evolution of the work in all its details. In Rome Ivanov discussed the picture with, and listened to the advice of, Overbeck, Cammuccini, Thorwaldsen, and Kiprensky. He also sent his sketches to his father in Petrograd. In this multitude of counsellors he did not always find wisdom, and much time and energy was expended in altering his plans in accordance with their suggestions. In the slow creation of this picture Ivanov showed that capacity for taking infinite pains that is not invariably allied to genius. He studied every detail of the customs, costume and landscape of the Holy Land. Every Friday and Sabbath Day he frequented the synagogue in Rome, observing and sketching the Jewish types there. Although he wrote to his father that for the youthful disciple, John, and the apostle, Andrew, he had followed the types immortalised by Leonardo in his "Last Supper," he

was not contented to take anything second-hand even from the paintings of those masters whom he admired most. For the head of The Messiah he had two models ; one for the forehead and nose, and another feminine model for the eyes. There exists also an interesting study in oils in which he has painted three different types of the Christ side by side with three heads from the antique—two sketches of Apollo, and one of Laocoon—as though seeking to arrive at an ideal type of masculine beauty.

In 1857, Ivanov first opened the doors of his studio to the public, having for a quarter of a century rigorously excluded all but his chosen friends. Rumours respecting the masterpiece were current in every circle of Roman society. "To be quite sincere," writes P. M. Kovalevsky in his *Reminiscences of Ivanov*, "the first glance at the picture was not to its advantage. One felt a kind of perplexity. "A Gobelin tapestry from the Vatican," I found myself saying, and Ivanov standing just behind me was listening with one ear.

"'I am very curious to hear your judgment,' " he said, as I remarked his presence, and we sat down. The breadth of subject, the power of expression, and striking audacity of the composition, the actuality and animation of the various groups, the vitality of the figures, which was almost startling and illusive, gradually and imperceptibly transformed the 'tapestry' into a living reality. . . . It seemed as though the rapture of those newly baptized in the

Jordan communicated itself to the spectators, so that they held their breath, watching with them the advancing figure of The Messiah." All the artistic world of Rome was astounded at the work of this modest, vacillating Russian painter; but the criticisms it evoked were by no means generally favourable. The German school found fault with the colouring. The Romans were rather shocked at the realistic and modern representation of a Biblical scene. Others again objected to the secondary place given to the figure of the Redeemer. The dramatic contrast between the wild beauty of St. John the Baptist, whose fiery eloquence is thrilling the crowd around him, and the calm forceful figure of the Messiah, advancing in the distance, unseen save by a few of the Baptist's converts, seemed to the orthodox-minded a reversal of all their accepted values. Its simplicity was almost resented by the less educated public. Kovalevsky says people were heard saying as they left the studio: "Per bacco, per bacco! Proprio vivi!" (By Jove! Every-day life!)

Echoes of his dubious fame reached Petrograd. Money was sent to pay for his journey, and the transportation of the picture to the Russian capital. Alas! Ivanov had lived too long poor and neglected away from his own land; he was ill, or at least hypochondriacal, he would gladly have spent the money on a long cherished visit to the Holy Land, but he dreaded the return to Russia. He had a kind of premonition that it would be the end of his career. His fears

proved correct. With very few exceptions the critics and the public received his life's work coldly and uncomprehendingly. Ivanov was chagrined by the attitude of his compatriots, who were still in an acute phase of Brullov-worship. His health became seriously affected, and he died a few months later "profoundly wounded in spirit," as Stassov says. The tragedy of his life, continues this writer, lies in the fact that he had worked passionately for a quarter of a century for himself and his art, only to confess at the close of his days that he had been working on wrong lines; to desire to begin afresh, and to realise that he had neither the strength nor time left to do so. Greatly as Stassov values "Christ appearing to the Nations" as a long stride in advance of Brullov's unreality and ostentation, he regrets the timidity which led Ivanov to alter his earlier designs for the picture. For example, the artist once intended his "nations" to be a real crowd of men, women and children, eager to dip in the river Jordan, and "from some Puritanical scruple" afterwards reduced the number, and eliminated the female element. In the same way he altered his first sketches for the surrounding landscape, a wild spacious spot shut in by trees and hills, to the present conventional scenery. Added to these defects of judgment, Ivanov was a poor colourist, and in this respect the work is crude and motley. Where he is really successful is in the characterization of individual types, and in his extremely conscientious treatment of every detail of costume

and surroundings. We have seen how closely he studied the temperament and external appearance of the Jews, and his intimate psychological knowledge of them gives a reality to the figures in his picture which is hardly to be found in the work of any of his contemporaries, Cornelius, Kaulbach, Flandrin, Brullov or Bruni. All unconsciously the spirit of truth and realism which was his birthright as a Russian, dwelt with Ivanov through the long years he spent in Italy, during which, in devoting himself to one mistaken ideal, he sacrificed a wider and healthier outlook upon his art. The best qualities of his picture were those he already possessed when he left the Academy in Petrograd and betook himself to Rome. It was this discovery, rather than the indifference of the Russian public, that broke the heart of this painter of one solitary and incomplete masterpiece.\*

As the second half of the XIX century drew to a close, painting, hitherto forced into unnatural channels by well-intentioned but somewhat despotic patronage, began to acquire greater vitality and freedom.

\* In 1848, Ivanov, unable to work on his great picture, occupied himself with a series of Biblical illustrations. The originality and lofty imaginative quality of these drawings is an indication of what the artist might have accomplished had he given his fantasy free play. Stasov says Ivanov fully realised that the Hebrews of old apprehended the supernatural in quite a different way from ourselves, influenced as we are by our education, and buried under the *debris* of countless creeds and systems.

The artist has reflected the spirit of old Asiatic civilisation in his wonderfully spiritual conceptions of Old and New Testament scenes. These drawings may be compared with some of Blake's work.

Realistic and national tendencies took the place of exclusively foreign influences. But there remained for a long time an æsthetic party in Russia, to whom the application of art to real life seemed a desecration, who continued to believe that sacred and historical subjects were alone worthy of the attention of poets and painters. It is curious to find Gogol, that first disciple of realism in fiction, ranged on the side of these "Olympians" in regarding art as only to be linked with the sublime, the heroic, and the classic, while in literature he looked life straight in the face, and was not afraid to speak the truth as he felt it. The full awakening did not come until after the Emancipation of the Serfs had made profound changes in the social ideals of the Russians, but before 1861 some tentative efforts were made to introduce the interests of daily life into art. In the pictures of Loupannov and Akimov the interior of the peasant's cottage is occasionally made the setting of anecdotic incidents; although the actors might have been transferred bodily from the works of French or English artists. The national colour in such pictures was as false and studied as in the spurious folk-melodies of Pashkov and Guriliev.

A truer pioneer of this movement was Alexis, Gavrilovich Venetsianov (1779-1847), who began his career as a caricaturist. Living for many years on his country property in the Government of Tver, he painted the peasants and their environment "just as they came," to use his own words. Unlike the

painters who followed him, he did not aim at expressing any profound moral idea in his works. He merely saw the surface beauty of his surroundings, and reproduced nature as it appeared to his somewhat shallow vision. Such simple and literal reproduction was, however, of value, because it sharpened powers of observation that had hitherto lain dormant in the Russian artist. Venetsianov left a number of studies, but few composed and finished pictures. His work "The Granary," a pleasant study of rural life, in which the peasants are shown—as they probably appeared before their master when he wished to use them as models—well-washed and in their holiday attire, is now in the Tretyakov Gallery, at Moscow. It is a timid effort to interest society in the world around them at a time when *genre* painting was regarded as an inferior style of art. Venetsianov rises higher in his picture "The Last Communion," although, even here, he cannot resist the tidying-up process, and the figure of the pretty girl sitting up in spotless cap and *fichu* in a bed that is in perfect order, and without a trace of suffering on her face, is not very convincing. The priest in his robes is dignified, but the most life-like of the little group of relatives gathered round the death-bed is an old woman kneeling behind the *Batoushka* in the act of crossing herself devoutly.

Venetsianov had many pupils and disciples ; among them : L. S. Plakhov (1811-1881) ; Vassily Stenberg (1816-1845), called "the Russian Teniers," who died

before he had time to fulfil the promise shown in his early studies of every-day life ; and E. F. Krendovsky, whose picture, " Sportsmen preparing for a Day's Shooting," is a carefully-painted example of literal and unassuming realism. But none of these painters had the genius and authority to carry the national tendency beyond the point where Venetsianov left it. The mass of the public still admired Brullov's overblown romanticism

But it was inevitable that the new spirit of satirical analysis which was making itself felt in literature through Gogol's " Revisor " and " Dead Souls," and a little later in music, through Dargomijsky's ironical songs, " The Future Privy Councillor," " The Miller," etc , should find its representative in painting. Paul Andreievich Fedotov (1815-1852) created a whole series of matter-of-fact and humorous pictures depicting the ridiculous side of bureaucratic and bourgeois life. It was difficult for these commentators upon the vices and follies of society—especially official society—to express themselves except under this cloak of apparently superficial wit. The jester's cap and bells was the disguise in which art and literature escaped the vigilant censorship of the days of Nicholas I. The titles of Fedotov's pictures and sketches speak for themselves " The Morning after the Wedding " ; " The Pet-dog is Ill " , " The Pet-dog is dead " , " His First Decoration " ; " The Choice of a Bride." These comedies of every-day life are conceived in a lighter vein than the works of our

Hogarth; their intention being merely satirical, not didactic. Fedotov was of a modest disposition, and never set up to be a moralist. That tendency was to show itself in Russian art, but not until a little later, with the paintings of Perov. Fedotov's pictures impressed the public, but they stirred up a sense of uneasiness among the academicians and the votaries of Brullov, who believed that the treatment of such degraded subjects was dragging Art—with a capital A—into the mud. The time was at hand, however, when new social ideals would prove too strong for these reactionaries. Fedotov was merely a link between the old art and the new. He died at thirty-six, after having become insane from overwork and worry.

A great change—one of those swift and perplexing changes that only happen in realms of autocracy—passed over Russia shortly after the accession of the Emperor Alexander II, when, by a stroke of the pen, twenty-three million serfs were given their liberty. Fresh views of life and duty now presented themselves to the educated classes in Russia. Hitherto art and literature had been the prerogative and pleasure of a cultured minority; now they were expected to satisfy wider interests and serve some purpose which should justify their existence. The reaction against the former "Olympian," and selfishly dilettante conception of art and literature was violent. Nowhere did the conflict between new and old ideals, which stirred every country in western Europe, rage

more fiercely than in Russia, where it was complicated by special social and political problems. Even the critic, Bielinsky, once the staunch champion of idealism, proclaiming that the artist is responsible only to his loftiest inspiration, so completely shifted his æsthetic point of view that before his death, in 1848, he no longer held it to be the mission of art to rise above the daily needs and interests of humanity. The democratic critics, Tchernychevsky, Dobrolioubov and Pissarev, who followed, were the mouthpieces of a phase of intolerant utilitarianism. Pissarev, in particular, enthusiast as he was for social freedom, cared not a jot for any form of art which could not be made to serve the purpose of the Radical party. There was nothing in the strife between the Classics and Romantics, with Ingres and Delacroix as party leaders, which quite equalled the bitterness of feeling that divided Russian society in the 'sixties. A second generation of artists now arose who concerned themselves very little with questions of abstract beauty, or academical traditions. Their ambition was to bear their part in the great social and political upheaval of the time. Looking upon their art as a moral and educational force, and greatly influenced by contemporary literature, they began to paint pictures 'with a purpose'. Not only painters, but authors and composers were now all engaged in observing and depicting what lay near at hand. The day of the romantic hero was over; "the People" had taken his place. "Study the psychology of the masses,"

“go to the folk” for inspiration—these were the maxims and catchwords of the new art.

The first great representative of this literary and didactic tendency in painting was Vassily Gregorievich Perov (1833-1882), who was hailed as the direct disciple of Fedotov when, in 1858, he exhibited his first picture. But already the difference between the two artists was immense. Fedotov merely painted life as he saw it; it was only the raw material of art. Perov, from the beginning, observed life and painted it under the influence of literature and contemporary opinion. Stchedrin (Michael Saltykov) one of the most biting satirists of the XIX. century, published his “Sketches of Provincial Life” early in the ‘sixties, and the types of bourgeois and small official which he cruelly perpetuates in its pages, soon re-appeared in Perov’s pictures. All through this phase of his work, Perov shows himself far more Hogarthian in mood than the superficially satirical Fedotov. His humour is more savage; his lessons more heavily emphasized. His second important picture “The Deacon’s Son receives his First Decoration,” in which a self-satisfied young man in a humble cottage is surrounded by his adoring family who are decking him out in the splendour of his new clothes, is like a cleverly composed illustration to one of Stchedrin’s “Sketches.” After this he attacked another class of society, over which the breath of irony had never as yet been directed. The clerical world is not too indulgently handled in his “Procession of the Cross

in the Village," " Tea-drinking at Mytistchi " and " The Refectory in the Monastery."

Having been awarded a gold medal, Perov was sent by the Academy for the usual period of study abroad. At the end of two years he asked permission to return home because he felt he could accomplish nothing really satisfactory away from his own people. With commendable courage he concludes his letter to the Council · " I find my sojourn abroad less profitable than the study and working out of the wealth of subjects, in town and country, which our own land can offer me I have in mind several subjects from Russian life, at which I could labour with love and sympathy, and with greater success, I hope, than in the representation of a people whom I do not know really well."

These words may be regarded as the confession of faith of a whole school of national painters soon to follow in the wake of Perov Shortly after his return to Russia, in 1865, Perov, touched by the best of all Nekrassov's poems of popular life, " Red-nosed Frost," painted a scene based upon the verses which describe how the peasant Prokl, the breadwinner of the family, is drawn to his premature grave. Slowly and painfully his faithful old horse is pulling the sledge which bears his master's remains over the snowy track. The widow, stricken, yet calm and dignified, holds the reins ; the two children sit inside, close against the coffin, with that quiet acceptance of death, that unshrinking tenderness and respect for

those who have passed over, which strikes everyone who has ever taken part in a Russian funeral. These are real peasants, moving in a real Russian landscape. The evening sky is cold and mournful, the way is dreary, but in the near distance the cupola of the village church rises above a snow-swept plain. The painter's mood is softened by his subject. Assuredly Perov would never have sent home from Paris or Rome anything so truthful or so profoundly moving as "A Village Funeral." Henceforth the note of pity blends with, and moderates, the harsh note of rebuke which characterized the artist's earlier pictures.

Perov was an industrious worker, and it is impossible to speak in detail of all his paintings. Among his most interesting things are "Fomoushka-Sych" (Tommy-Owl) a wonderfully life-like study of a Russian folk-type; an apostolic old man, with a rugged thoughtful, spiritual face, and eyes that seem to see "the things which belong to his peace." "The Arrival of the Governess" (1865), a shy, refined girl entering for the first time into a family of hateful parvenus; the pitiful old "Drawing Master" (1867) long past his work, but still awaiting his pupil; "The Bird-Catcher," "The Fisherman" (1871), "The Botanist" (1875), "The Pigeon-Fancier" (1875), "The Sportsmen's Repast" (1871), "Peasants watching the Arrival of the First Train" (1868), all reflect his deep insight into the life of his own folk.

Perov has a counterpart in Modeste Moussorgsky,



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THE TROIKA

*Private Carriage - Moscow*

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who was only six years his junior. The pictures of the former are scarcely more vividly realistic than the songs and operas of the latter. Both have immortalized a complete series of Russian types, so that if we had never visited the country, or read a single work of Russian realistic fiction, we still might reconstruct from the works of these two men the whole psychology of rural Russia. Both had the same passionate desire to touch human nature—but above all the nature of their own compatriots—as intimately as possible. Both despised alike the false classicism which believed itself sublime, and the idealistic compromises with the truth of those genre painters who represented carefully combed and well-dressed peasant models as the types of the *мужик*. There is nothing in the works of these two artists so powerful or so significant as their respective presentments of the Russian folk, unkempt, uncouth, maybe, but life-like. The people we see in Perov's pictures we meet again among the naïve, turbulent crowds that throng the stage in Moussorgsky's "Boris Godounov." The characters and scenic settings of Moussorgsky songs—"Trepak," in which Death meets the weary peasant, and dances a measure with him in the snow, Savichna the village idiot; the Orphan—repeat themselves on the canvases of Perov. Both men were too passionately preoccupied with their subjects to care greatly how they presented them, and both incurred the same reproach—an insufficient mastery over technical means. Together with Dostoievsky, the

novelist, and Nekrassov, the poet, they stand clearly as representatives of the generation that witnessed the Emancipation. Foremost in the ranks of the protesting spirits of their day, they, too, were champions of "the humiliated and offended."

Besides the pictures of peasant and middle-class life, of which I have spoken, Perov exhibited almost annually one or two portraits of famous contemporaries. To this branch of painting he imparted the same sober realism which permeates all his *genre* pictures; the last traces of insincere portraiture passed away with him. Pisemsky, the brothers Anton and Nicholas Rubinstein, the dramatist, Ostrovsky, Dahl, Tourgeniev, Dostoevsky—a masterly and tender piece of work—and the poet, Maikov, were among his sitters; a portrait of himself reveals a strong, rugged, honest personality—a man who might get near to the people, while showing himself merciless to the artistic snobs of his day.

The new movement towards nationalism and realism of which Perov was the first whole-hearted representative, had its origin and development outside the Academy of Art. It was one of the many fresh impulses which followed the accession of Alexander II, when an original creative spirit stirred all branches of art and literature. Not that the Academy absolutely refused to make concessions to the new tendencies, but they did not go far enough. In replacing the set "subject" for competition for the great gold medal by a less restricted "theme," the

Council believed that it was taking a great step in advance. But the competitors complained that a "theme," such as "anger," "homesickness," "gladness," or any other abstract motive, was—in view of the varying temperaments which were called upon to illustrate it—nearly as restrictive as a definite scene from the Scriptures or history. They petitioned to be allowed a free choice of subjects. The reply not being satisfactory, thirteen of the most promising students seceded from the Academy in November, 1863, under the leadership of I. N. Kramskoi. Shortly afterwards they formed the "Artistic Artel"—or co-operative society, which had not a long life, but eventually led to the Society of Travelling Exhibitions, founded in 1872, which represented the chief organisation of the Russian National School, and is associated with all the finest talent of the 'seventies and 'eighties of last century. The Academy naturally suffered from the loss of so many promising artists, and for a time the Moscow School of Art took the lead in all that was new, daring, and essentially racy of the soil. The Society of Travelling Exhibitions held shows annually in most of the chief provincial towns as well as in the capitals, and did much to develop and extend artistic culture. This advance in the love and practice of art among all classes of society, taken in conjunction with the remarkable series of pictures

\* The word *Artel*, which may be translated variously as squad, company, is the term used for the various peasant associations having a co-operative intention.

of purely Russian origin produced about this time, no longer permits us to doubt of the existence of a National School in the most definite sense of the word.

With such a phenomenally rapid growth of artistic interests as that which now took place it is difficult to draw hard and fast lines between various tendencies, or to segregate certain groups of artists in clearly defined schools. We have seen how the *genre* painters of the 'fifties, such as Fedotov, with their humorous representations of real life, were succeeded by the painters of a more "doctrinaire" tendency, who, under the literary influence, began to preach, to argue, to convince. Perov led this school of painting, but near to him in aims and achievements may be placed Illarion Mikhailovich Pryanishnikov (1840-1894), Constantine Apollonovich Savitsky (b. 1845), Nicholas Alexandrovich Yaroshenko (1846-1899), Valerian Ivanovich Yakobi (1834), and many other painters of daily life. These artists combined the expression of democratic and—for their period—advanced ideas with the technical methods of the classical school.

Pryanishnikov first made a name with his picture, "The Gostinny Dvor" (the Market, or Bazaar), a wonderfully animated scene, showing a profound knowledge of the psychology of the masses, for which he received a silver medal in 1865. His "Blessing the Horses"—a ceremony performed in the northern Russia on August 16th O.S.—is very popular. In



Yasushi (N. I.)

October 1941

"LIFE IS EVERYWHERE"



"A Church Warden" he has immortalised a certain type of self-important benevolence "A Touching Romance" is the title of one of his cleverest pictures of middle-class life a girl and a young man sitting close together on a sofa; he is singing and accompanying himself on a guitar, and she is apparently moved to tears Perhaps his song is a declaration of a love that would otherwise have to keep silence Other works by Pryanishnikov are "A Village Festival," "1812," and "Empty Carts going Homeward" Savitsky started his career with one or two modest studies of single figures, such as "An Organ-grinder," "A Sentinel," and then went on to treat popular subjects on a large scale In "Repairing the Railroad," "Discussing the Boundary"—angry peasants quarrelling with officials—and "Meeting the Ikon," he has painted some characteristic types, especially of peasant women. But the tendency to make a "palpable design" upon the sympathy of the spectator robs his pictures of some of their sincerity. In his great canvas, "Off to the Front," depicting a crowded railway station and groups of unwilling conscripts being dragged forcibly away from their women-kind, we feel that he is preaching anti-compulsion at the expense of sincerity, consequently what is meant to move us, merely leaves us cold

The same criticism could never be passed upon the works of Yaroshenko, who makes no obvious effort to play upon our emotions, but reflects so much of his

own tender and sincere vision of life in all his paintings that his "Prisoner," who has climbed on his table to catch the one ray of light that reaches to his cell, or his work-worn, stunted "Stoker," sweltering at the furnace mouth, quickly excite sympathy with their unenviable lots. Not in vain has he been called "poet of the afflictions of the poor."

Passing over such painters of merit as C. V. Lemokh, Carl Huhn (1830-1877), Gregory Massoedov ("A Prayer for Rain," "Reading out the Decree of Emancipation, etc."), a word must be said about that exclusively national artist, Vassily Maximovich Maximov (1844-1911), who painted many sides of peasant life. There is poignancy and real dramatic feeling in his picture, "The Sick Husband", a peasant lying unconscious on a wretched bed, while the wife kneels in fervent prayer before the row of ikons in the *Krazny ougle*, the "beautiful corner" where the sacred images are kept. How different from the usual representations of similar subjects, in which the wife or mother is nearly always shown bending with solicitude over the beloved invalid, a cup of food, or a medicine glass in her hand! This poor peasant has learnt nothing from the district nurse of our English village-life, she cannot put her faith in doctors or remedies that are non-existent, but she knows where to turn in the hour of her perplexity, and also the mystic secret of lifting her husband into the presence of God. Although this is his most moving work, because it shows us how the spirit of

the peasantry rises above the hardest material conditions, yet popular opinion has probably decided in favour of Maximov's large and crowded canvas, "The Arrival of the Fortune-Teller at a Village Wedding." Half the hamlet assembled in the *izba*, are seated, eating and drinking at the long wooden table, and now they are turning, scared but interested, to look at the strange figure that has just crossed the threshold. The corners of the hut are dark, the light is concentrated on the pale, anxious faces of the wedding party. The deacon has risen from his place, and looks askance at his enemy; the priest is saying a calming word to the bride. The old fortune-teller in his ragged sheepskins, a wild growth of beard flowing over his chest, stands unmoved like some sinister statue, accepting with rude dignity the obsequious greetings of the bride's parents.

Only the young bridegroom seems imperturbable. He is not quite of the peasantry, for he wears a student's overcoat. He has lived in the city, and is of the new generation that smiles alike on the *Batoushka* and the *Koldoun* \*. It is certainly one of the best pictures of this school of painting. Maximov does not disdain the technical side of his art, and here the drawing and lighting of the picture are irreproachable.

Gradually as more emotion and enthusiasm found their way into art, the didactic tendency gave place to the ideals of a new generation of painters with

\* *Batoushka*—padre or priest. *Koldoun*, a fortune-teller or wizard.

whom instincts of form, and more particularly of colour, took the ascendancy of the moral idea. To this group of artists belong Abraham E. Archipov (b. 1862), Nicholas Petrovich Bogdanov-Bielsky, (c. 1868), Vassily Nicholaevich Baksheiev (b. 1862), and Leonid Ossipovich Pasternak (b. 1862). Bogdanov-Bielsky and Pasternak both reveal a feeling for colour that is lacking in Perov and many of his followers. In their early works these artists show a strong impressionist influence. Bogdanov-Bielsky evidently concluded at an early stage of his career that life may be truthfully expressed in other terms than those of the plainest prose. There is poetry as well as actuality in his pictures of rural life. Very beautiful in a quietly emotional way is "The Future Monk" (1889), a realistic interior of a cottage in which a dreamy, serious boy is listening earnestly to the words of a pilgrim, his thoughts already on the road to Jerusalem. Another very fine work by this artist is "A Sunday Reading in the Village School" (1893), which includes over a score of folk-types, old and young, listening devoutly to the young deacon who is reading aloud. There is nothing cruel or exaggerated in this picture; not the least attempt to paint a brutalised peasantry in order to serve political ends; and yet no one who has been in Russia will deny familiarity with the prototypes of these grave, resigned, sweet-natured men and women, and these eager, and precociously thoughtful children. The passionate thirst for knowledge which exists





among the Russian people is wonderfully expressed in this serene and dignified work. Some of my readers may remember Pasternak's picture of four typical Russian students, treated in the style of L'Ecole des Batignolles, entitled "Before the Examination," which was acquired for the Luxembourg, where, together with Marie Bashkirtsiev, he represents what can best be described as a group of *dé-paysés*, who blend the French manner with a limited measure of Russian sentiment.

Arkhipov, while following the technique of the impressionists, chose his subjects almost exclusively from Russian life. "The Iconographer" (1889), and "A Lay Brother" (1892) in the Tretyakov Gallery at Moscow are his most accessible pictures; some of his best works such as the wonderfully atmospheric "After the Thaw," and the "Boat on the River Oka," being in private collections. While Arkhipov is at his best in outdoor work, Baksheiev's principal pictures are indoor scenes. "The Prose of Life" (1893), a poor middle-class breakfast table, a haggard, unsuccessful business man, a worried wife, a despairing daughter, an "account rendered," some one waiting on the threshold—all the elements of a sordid domestic drama—reveals a close psychological affinity to Perov, combined with far greater art in the presentation of his subject; here is a sense of colour and a manipulation of light which the founder of the didactic school would perhaps have disdained to employ.

So violent was the recoil from classicism and romanticism, with their attendant evils of pomposity, aloofness from human interest, and extravagance ; so passionate was the desire to penetrate the hearts of average men and women, to awaken sympathy and respect for the toilers and sufferers in the world, that for a time every branch of painting, except *genre* and landscape, lost its interest for Russian artists. Although it may seem that I am giving undue preponderance to this section of art, my real difficulty is to deal at all justly and adequately with the great number of realistic painters who achieved fame, or at least popularity, in the second half of the XIX. century. Midway between the " literary " or " didactic " school of the 'sixties and 'seventies, and the Russian impressionists, stands a group of many-sided and highly gifted painters who, combining modern technique with an intensely national spirit, were not satisfied to paint merely the prose of daily existence. Men of such wide and varied outlook and of such exuberant interests as Kramskoi, Makovsky, Schwartz and Repin, have touched every side of the national life. They have painted the world of actuality, and the supernatural world which is so closely linked with it in the mind of the Russian folk ; they have reconstructed the past, and reflected the present with convincing sincerity and intimate knowledge. In the following chapter I propose to give a brief summary of the work of these individual artists, who enlarged the limitations of the nationalist school.

## CHAPTER VII

### PAINTING (*continued*)

The Society of Travelling Exhibitions. Kramskoi. V. Makovsky. C. Makovsky. Schwartz. Repin. Some women painters.

IT was but natural that, as time went on, Art should concern itself less exclusively with the newly created idol of the 'sixties—the People. The members of the Society of Travelling Exhibitions began to awake to the fact that they were emphasizing and bewailing evils that were greatly ameliorated, and even in some cases completely cured. Imagination was now permitted to play some part in their selection of subjects. Some painters sought material in the historic past, others in legendary and heroic themes. We have seen how in 1863 the competitors for the Academic awards demanded complete freedom of choice in this respect and seceded from the Institution sooner than forego this privilege. It was not likely that men who were actuated by such strong instincts of artistic liberty would break with convention only to be entirely dominated by one idea and one phase of emotion; even though that idea and that emotion centred in the passionately absorbing interest of the peasant's

lot. Kramskoi himself, the leader of the thirteen "emancipated," was one of the first to give full play to his versatility. With his religious pictures I deal elsewhere. His vein of elegiac sentiment, so pronounced in his treatment of sacred subjects, found an outlet in the picture, "Inconsolable Grief" (1884), which is doubtless an anonymous portrait. This work always has a small crowd of spectators before it in the Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow. The red-eyed, grief-worn woman, standing by the newly-arrived boxes filled with "floral tributes," appeals to the middle-class public, whose sorrows have been consoled by similar episodes; and it is only just to say that Kramskoi's lady in black depicts real and dignified mourning, without any tendency to hysterical exaggeration. A pendant, in a sitting posture, is like one of those *encores* which musicians are induced to give to a greedy public with the result that the first impression of a piece is weakened by repetition. The most remarkable of Kramskoi's purely imaginative works is the scene from Gogol's "A Night in May"\* in which the Roussalkas, or Watersprites, are disporting themselves by moonlight at the edge of a forest mere. The Roussalkas, who have just come down from the haunted house on the hillside, are robed in white garments, with their long plaited tresses hanging down their backs, and look like good girls going to bed rather than wild,

\* This picture is made the basis of the scene in Rimsky-Korsakov's opera as we saw it staged during the Beecham season of Russian Opera in 1914

wicked, and soulless beings lying in wait to lure the unwary traveller to his doom. Nevertheless, the types of dreamy feminine beauty, the moonlight playing on the figures and grassy slopes, the suggestion of mystery lurking in the dark woods of the background, and the delicate finish of the tall reeds and waterplants in the foreground, make up a picture of true romantic glamour.

Of Vladimir Makovsky (b. 1846), who must not be confused with his brothers, Constantine and Nicholas, Stasov says "He is one of our finest painters. All his pictures bear witness to his remarkable talents, but in the best and loftiest of them—'Condemned'—he strikes a powerful note of tragedy. The scene is from contemporary life, and intensely moving. Between two *gens d'armes* with drawn swords a young peasant is just leaving the court of justice. He has been condemned to exile in Siberia for years—perhaps for life. As he steps over the threshold of a door guarded by armed sentries, men with good, uncultured faces, and kind hearts, still unspoilt by military routine, he meets his father and mother who stand weeping at the foot of the step. Hard and self-contained, he is passing them by. What are father and mother to him now? He has done with them, and with his past life. He gives a surly glance at his mother, who is ready to throw herself sobbing into his arms, and pretends not to see his father, a timid, heart-broken peasant, who is wiping his eyes and clutching at his wife's skirt like a child. . . . This

picture penetrates so profoundly into the tragedies of daily existence that it must be accepted as a very important contribution to Russian art."\* A few years later (1881) Makovsky painted a pendant entitled "Acquitted," in which a young peasant woman has just been set free, and is embracing her little boy amid the congratulations of her friends. But the subject itself does not call for such profound and varied psychological treatment, and it shares the neglect of most pendants "The Bank suspends Payment" (1881) like the foregoing work, hangs in the Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow. Here the contrast between the victims, crushed and despairing, or angry and vociferous, according to their temperaments, and the stolid indifference of the police and the bank officials, offers many opportunities for a clever physiognomist like Makovsky; but here again he fails to attain to the tragic power which moves us in "Condemned"; there is a kind of Frith-like bustle, a histrionic activity, about this picture which places it below the sincere ugliness of Perov's *tableaux de mœurs*. That Makovsky could have rivalled Fedotov in humorous character painting is proved by his delightfully homely picture, "The Duet": an old couple seated at the piano; she confident and capable, he extremely diffident, meek and accustomed to rebuke. Here, too, there is a hint of trouble to come, but it is only tragic-comedy that is in the air.

\* This picture is in the possession of Dimitri Vassilievich Stassov, Petrograd



*Мазовский (1877)*



Constantine Makovsky, a more imaginative painter, is represented in the Alexander III. Gallery at Petrograd by one fantastic scene that deserves mention here. His "Roussalkas" are much bolder in treatment than those of Kramskoi. A wild and wayward procession of white nude bodies, interlaced in almost frenzied movement, moving like a mist-wreath over the surface of the moonlit mill pond. One feels in spite of the distinctly sensuous materialization of the Roussalkas in the foreground, that these are supernatural beings, and that water is their true element. In the background is seen the graveyard with its crosses and a wooden church with five cupolas. The juxtaposition of the Christian symbols with the lingering pagan superstition reminds us of the spirit of the old missal painters, though the technical methods are, of course, modern. The Roussalkas figure in many poems, operas, and pictures, but nowhere have I met with a more poetic realisation of their sinister beauty than in this work.

Vyacheslav Grigorievich Schwartz (1838-1869) in spite of his German name was a native of Russia and steeped in the history and archæology of the country. He was one of the greatest historical painters that Russia has ever possessed, and the first to bring erudition, thought and sincerity to bear upon his pictures of the past. He reconstructed with astonishing realism the picturesque and dramatic period of Ivan the Terrible,—that period when, as we have seen, all the varied elements, western and eastern

that go to make up the Russian civilization of to-day were first fused into an organic nationality. A period of study under Schrader in Berlin and Jules Lefebvre in Paris, did not in the least weaken his fervent interest in Russia and her history; but probably he owed to the latter that solicitude for perfection and exact knowledge in all he undertook which has won him the name of "the Russian Meissonier." His first exhibit at the Academy Schools (1860), "Ivan the Terrible at the Siege of Kazan," was awarded a silver medal. The following year he produced a far finer work, "Ivan the Terrible by the corpse of his murdered son"\* Horror, and the overwhelming sense of remorse are expressed in every line of the Tsar's face, and in the utter prostration of his attitude. After this Schwartz went on from strength to strength, accomplishing in the short years of his life a prodigious amount of work, having regard to the care which he lavished on every detail of it. His illustrations to Count A. Tolstoy's historical novel, "Prince Serebryany" and Lermontov's poem, "The Tale of the Merchant Kalashnikov," both dealing with the days of "the Terrible," are unequalled for intimate knowledge and vivid realisation of a period he had made his own. He reveals Ivan, the centre of all activity and advancement, a strange mixture of dissimulation and frankness, of tyranny and wise

\* Stasov gives 1861 as the date of this picture, and says Schwartz was only twenty-three when he painted it. The catalogue of the Tretyakov Gallery gives the year 1864.

statecraft, of cruelty alternating with moments of unfeigned devoutness, more completely than any painter or writer before or since his time, and grouped around the Tsar he paints the court in its Asiatic servility, its unbridled sensuality, its indifference to suffering and its greed. The boyards, princes, jesters, falconers; the *oprichniki* — the Tsar's ruthless bodyguard—now blustering in splendour with their emblems, a dog's head and a broom, at their saddlebags; now masquerading in monks' robes, old nurses and servitors as blindly faithful as dogs; hunts, festivals, religious rites—the whole life and colour of the XVI century is reconstructed for us in the pictures and illustrations of this gifted artist.

Schwartz afterwards passed from this period to the more sumptuous and peaceful times of Alexis Mikhailovich (1645-1676), upon which he also threw the light of historic truth in such pictures as "The Procession of the Patriarch Nikon on Palm Sunday," when the Tsar himself held the bridle of the white ass upon which the Patriarch was seated, "The Chancellery of the Ambassadors, Moscow" (1667), "Tsar Alexis Mikhailovich playing Chess," with two or three obsequious boyards looking on, and a cat unconcerned with problems of checkmate, or the proprieties of court-life, playing with a chessman on the floor; "The Patriarch Nikon walking in the Garden of his 'New Jerusalem'"; and finally "The Tsar Alexis driving from Church on a Spring Day,"

which is considered his masterpiece. Schwartz has painted a typical Russian landscape, the snow melting into mud on the rough track, but lying cold and white on the distant fields ; a poor hamlet with a timber church ; and suddenly appearing on the scene the lumbering state chariot of the Tsar, drawn up the steep hill by a team of panting horses, and escorted by mounted boyards. Perhaps the most remarkable feature of the work is the animated crowd of monks, soldiers and peasants surrounding the entrance to the church, which, distant and microscopic as they are, still give a wonderful impression of excitement and motion \* " Unhappily for Russian art," says Stassov, " Schwartz died at thirty-one, having accomplished little in comparison with what he was capable of giving out ; moreover, he was not greatly appreciated at the time of his death."

Of all the painters dealt with so far, it must be confessed that in matters of technique they still lagged behind the painters of France and England, and were poor colourists. The interest of their pictures lies chiefly in their national sentiment

Elias Efimovich Repin (b. 1844) is a giant among Russian painters, and has done a colossal work for his country Stassov is insistent upon this artist's completely independent self-development : he cannot be described as the continuator of any previous artist,

\* The pictures mentioned above, with the exception of the first, are now in the Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow, others are in private collections I have found it impossible to obtain satisfactory reproductions of any of Schwartz's works.

nor is it possible to attach him to any one school since he combines in himself the elements of them all. A man of strong views and feelings, he has almost invariably aimed at frank and full self-expression ; and just because of his strong individuality, in the few instances where he has allowed himself to be influenced by a merely fleeting interest or ephemeral emotion, his failure is more complete than in the case of a weaker man. He is at his best in great scenes, in spacious settings, or in depicting moments of intense emotion translated into violent action. Stassov, coupling his name with that of V. V. Verestschagin, uses musical phraseology to describe Repin's largeness of outlook and breadth of treatment, and says that both artists are greatest in " choral creation " ; adding, with less justice, that Repin can only express with power and sincerity such things as he has seen with his own eyes, and experienced in his own soul. " Imagination serves him ill," continues this critic, " and has never been of any help to him in his best and most significant works " To the painter of the Tsarevna Sophia imprisoned in impotent anger during the execution of her Streltsi, and the appalling scene of Ivan the Terrible embracing the body of the son he has killed in a fit of insane fury, it is impossible to deny the gift of imagination, but it is the tragic imagination of a Webster, worlds removed from the poetic fancy which Repin needed for the treatment of such a subject as " Sadko and the Sea King's Daughters "

In his student days, his diploma works, "Job and his Comforters" (1869) and "The Raising of Jairus's Daughter" (1871), showed an original conception even of these oft-repeated themes, and the pictures were much discussed, and, on the whole, approved. In 1873, fame came to him at twenty-eight with the revelation of the strength and earnestness of his nature. "The Bourlaki (Haulers) on the Volga," startled the public into the realisation of the sorry lot of some of their fellow creatures. But though in these early pictures Repin paints "with a purpose," he is too great an artist to let the moral intention cause him to forget the great question of the style and picturesque presentation of his subject. In his mastery of the technical side of his art he was already far in advance of the harsh and positive realism of the painters of the 'sixties. In "The Haulers," on a little spit of sand jutting out into the wide reaches of the Volga, he shows us a team of human beasts of burden, yoked in pairs, pulling with all their might as they tow a heavy sloop through the still water on a windless, blazing summer day. They are types of the "submerged" from all parts of Russia, and unequally matched as regards strength and goodwill. The two leaders are strong, bullocky men doing their work easily; a third is an old man, yellow with jaundice, weak, but conscientious; a fourth, smoking a pipe, is a loafer from the cities who never has done, or will, "do his bit"; another has the classic profile which

proclaims him a Greek; the odd man out, at the end of the towing rope, is also near the end of the fast-fraying cord which binds him to life. It is more than a picture of the pains and grievances of a class; it is life itself with its unaccountable disparities, its inevitable hardships, its seemingly unaccountable injustice in the allotment of burdens. But the community of suffering makes it endurable. Bravely and steadily, with one or two exceptions, the "black people," as such workers used to be called in Russia, trudge on under the brazen sky, singing as they go that glorious solemn melody, with its reminiscence of the church-modes, which we have now learned to love in this country.

" Pulley-hauley, pull away, lads,  
A long, strong pull all together "

The fact that the lot of the *bourlaki* like that of all the labouring classes in Russia has greatly improved during the last forty years, does not detract from the pathos of this picture, which was painted only twelve years after the emancipation of the serfs. "It is true," wrote Stasov, "that this labour is now voluntary,' but what of the life that had preceded it for centuries?" Repin's work was severely handled by critics of the Parnassian school; but, as Stasov reminds us, Courbet and Millet had already made good the claim of *The Stonebreaker*, *The Woodcutter*, and *The Man with the Hoe* to be represented in art; Repin's toilers have a darker background, that is all the difference.

Ten years later Repin produced another great picture of popular life : " The Procession of the Cross," as strong and, on the whole, as truthful as the " Haulers on the Volga."\* Here we have a great crowd advancing on a broad, sunny road, stalwart peasants carrying a shrine, priests, countrywomen, petty officials in black broadcloth, or in uniform, mounted soldiers and police—every type and every variety of costume ; and in the middle of the motley throng a quick, violent episode such as appealed to Repin's dramatic sense : a Cossack lashing the eager people back to heel like dogs. How the radicals rejoiced and praised the artist's courage in showing up this " incident from everyday life ! " Scores of times I have looked at the picture, and longed to blot out that one discordant note in the harmony of this great chorale of national life, which adds nothing to its truthfulness. For even supposing that Repin actually witnessed the incident, and that it filled him, naturally enough, with fiery indignation, was it worth while to perpetuate it ; to paint, coldly and carefully this indelible accusation against a body of brave men ? From the legitimate sympathetic realism of " The Haulers " to this flash of resentment expressed in paint seems a distinct descent in artistic dignity. For the rest the picture is admirable, being full of light and colour and vivacity.

Repin followed up the success of these works with a picture of unsparing realism, " The Exile's un-

\* Both these pictures are in the Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow.

expected return," which was fiercely attacked by the critics for its "ugliness," and perhaps also on account of its supposed "intention." The exile who has come back, unawaited, is creeping into the room wan and weary with a fixed strained look in his eyes, like a ghost gliding back to its old haunts. The wife has risen from her chair in utter astonishment, only her extreme profile is visible, and its expression is enigmatical. Of the two children doing their lessons at the table, a *gauche* little girl of six or seven looks distinctly unfriendly, her brother, a small edition of the exile himself, is excited and curious; a girl in her teens interrupted in practising the piano turns half-round on the music stool with a scared expression—she is old enough to remember the past. We can discern the different temperaments of the children at a glance, and fortell the future attitude of each one towards the exile. But the underlying tragic problem of the picture is suggested by the wife's hesitating attitude. In the bare, but genteel room, we read a tale of poverty and struggle. The children are growing up diligent and good, there is a gleam of hope in the future, and then—this wild-eyed apparition, this vision of broken health and shattered enthusiasms. Is it possible that the unexpected exile is also unwelcome? Unlovely the picture may be, but deep in its expression of pathos, and daring in the very crudity and bareness of its setting. None of Repin's works combines profound psychological insight with an austere, plain-spoken realism to the same degree.

"The Duel" might pass at the first glance for a conventional treatment of a conventional subject, but for the intensely tragic expression in the face of the dying man as he grasps the hand of his former friend who has just shot him through the heart. Hopeless anguish in the eyes, a half-smile on the lips, through which the last breath is escaping—this blending of yearning, regret and whimsical valour always reminds me of Mercutio's death scene, and his despairing, half-jesting words "'Twill serve. Ask for me to-morrow, and you will find me a grave man." Two fine studies of individual types are "The Hunchback" and "The Archdeacon." The former has a keen sensitive face; the thoughts of this poor cripple—who also figures in the foreground of "The Procession of the Cross"—are not the thoughts of the average deformed beggar; if the pictures in the Tretyakov Gallery talked at night we fancy that he might put some shrewdly sceptical questions as to the meaning of life and the educational value of suffering to the superb "Archdeacon," who, with his fierce dark eyebrows, his flowing white beard, his sensible but very temporal cast of face, looks like a man who does his daily work with authority, enjoys his daily meals with the help of a sound digestion, and concerns himself little with the subtler problems of existence. Broadly conceived, massive in the method of its painting, rich in colour, and full of character (the expression in the fat, strong, shapely hands is inimitable) this portrait has the Rubens air



*Repin (1871)*

THE ARCHDEACON

*Fred. 1887 (after Repin, Moscow)*



and is one of Repin's finest essays in a kind of legitimate realism which harbours no didactic design.

Like so many Russians—Joukovsky, Gogol, Dostoevsky, Balakirev, Nesterov, Vaznietsov—to mention but a few writers, musicians and painters—Repin, too, experienced a phase of mysticism which came upon him in middle life. After his early essay "The Raising of Jairus's Daughter" (1871) the painter left religious subjects severely alone until the beginning of the present century, when he began to work upon a large picture of "The Temptation in the Wilderness." I have rather a humorous recollection of my first sight of this work. Stassov, who had seen waves of sterilising mysticism check the activity and blight the genius of Balakirev and other friends, was genuinely alarmed for Repin, whom he regarded not only as the greatest representative of Russian art, but as one of the very first contemporary painters in Europe. He told me in the picturesque and forcible language of which he was a master what he felt about this excursion into Biblical interpretation. Consequently when we set out one afternoon in the spring of 1901 to visit Repin, whose residence was at the Academy of Arts, of which he was—and still is—the President, Stassov was greatly pre-occupied with the question of "The Temptation." "He'll not show it to *me*. Will he show it to *you*, I wonder? No! He will not, he cannot, it is impossible, *cattivissimo*!"

After tea, and some conversation about art in general we went into the studio. A curtain evidently con-

cealed a large canvas at one end of the room. Stassov cast glances towards it now and then as though longing to tear down the curtain, rod, rings and all, and pour forth the vials of his wrath upon the offending picture. But not a word was said. We looked at a number of studies, one or two portraits in various stages of completion, (including the very fine picture of La Duse), spoke of the possibility of a Russian Exhibition in London, and the atmosphere remained calm; but all the same Stassov's psychological barometer marked "very stormy." Presently the artist's daughter and Stassov left the studio. As far as I can remember, they went up a back staircase to see the view from a balcony or belvedere above. I was preparing to follow them when Repin whispered. "I've something I want to show you. Come quickly! I cannot show it to Vladimir Vassil'ich, he always gets so furious you know." We doubled back into the studio like hares with a greyhound on their track. In a twinkling the curtain was pulled aside and "The Temptation" was revealed to me!

Repin had chosen to illustrate the words. "then the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain." Doubtless some symbolism underlay the work, but it was undecipherable at the first glance. The colouring was as unnatural as the composition. The work took my breath away. It was so utterly unlike anything that the painter had produced before, that I was ready to believe it had been produced under the spell of some hypnotic suggestion of an unhealthy kind.

On the dizzy summit of the mountain stood two figures · a weak and strangely unconvincing Christ, and a corpulent flaccid and effeminate Satan; absolutely repellent, without a single persuasive quality. No averagely good and honest man, let alone the Christ, would have suffered an instant's temptation from the presence or speech of such an apparition. The most impressive thing was the landscape with its suggestion of "the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them."

I could perfectly understand the impulse of the realist, who for thirty years had been painting with admirable sincerity and conviction "the things seen with his own eyes" to take this sudden plunge outside himself into the purely spiritual sphere. But this strange combination of the sensuous, not to say the sensual, with the supernatural could only have been successfully treated by Vroubel, and spelt failure in Repin's hands. Not for a moment, looking at the face of the artist beside me as he scrutinized his own work, could I doubt the absolute sincerity of the mood that inspired it. The brutal Cossack in "The Procession of the Cross" may possibly have found his way there at the whispered suggestion of a "progressive" friend, but "The Temptation," must have been the result of a sudden, unprompted, unwise, but honest, change of artistic ideal. Repin's attitude to his own picture disarmed me of suspicion and the desire to criticize. The curtain was replaced, and we joined the others softly like guilty con-

spirators. As we drove away Stassov looked at me with an "*Et tu Brute*" expression. "You *have* seen it," he said; "and moreover you have said something sympathetic Do not deny it. I *know*. *Boje moy!*"

When the picture was exhibited very shortly afterwards, the severity of the criticism it evoked justified in some degree Stassov's condemnation of it, but apparently it also served to moderate his invective, for in one of his last articles published in 1906, he merely says: "in this picture Repin has missed his aim."

Although Stassov believed that the historical and grand styles did not accord with Repin's temperament, yet he did not deny the arresting dramatic power of his "Ivan the Terrible clasp<sup>ing</sup> the Body of his Son," and "The Tsarevna Sophia;" while the splendid vitality of his "Cossacks indit<sup>ing</sup> a mocking Letter to the Sultan" appealed to his own robust delight in Repin's "choral" moods

Respecting the first of these pictures one would almost prefer to keep silence. When we have recovered from the shock of its Euripidean sensationalism we are forced to concede its harrowing pathos, the masterly psychological insight with which the artist expresses the sudden reaction from murderous fury to remorse in the senile Tsar, the perfection of his textile painting, and the accuracy of his archæological details. In the very contrast between the subdued rich apartment in the Kremlin and the shambles that paroxysmal rage has made of it lies in a great measure the repellent

power of the picture. For there is blood everywhere ; on the wounded head of the dying Tsarevich, on the old withered hand of the Tsar that clasps it to his bosom in a frenzied embrace, on the prince's tunic, on the Oriental carpets and the murderous steel-tipped staff that has just claimed another victim. No stage blood, but horribly realistic, bright arterial blood, dripping and coagulating where it falls, and, once seen, all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten our memories of this incarnation of a " heart-crazing crime." It is said that women have fainted while looking at this picture in the Tretyakov Gallery, and that a few years ago, a man, filled with horror, made a determined effort to destroy it. Although Repin does not in this work appreciate the line of demarcation which separates the impressive from the revolting, yet we should be wrong to class it with the delirious eccentricities of a Wiertz. The picture is good and powerful painting, whatever we may feel about the artist's vision of his subject. Those who have seen Shaliapin in the last act of Rimsky-Korsakov's " Ivan the Terrible," where the broken-hearted Tsar weeps over the corpse of his daughter, will realise that he has studied this picture to some purpose.

In Repin's crowded canvas of " The Cossacks " there is a kind of gigantic elemental strength. These are not the Russian cavalry of to-day, but the Zaporozhsky Cossacks of the Dneiper in the XVII. century, gathered round their captain Ivan Serko. The vitality of these dare-devils is amazing. As we

look at them we seem to hear their uncouth glee. Even Repin has never painted anything more veracious and virile than this confraternity of audacious, roystering fighting-cocks. It recalls, too, the fact that the quarrel with the Sultan is an old one, and that in the Caucasus, descendants of these men are now fighting the Turks with the same gusto and mettle.

It is impossible to speak in detail of all Repin's paintings, therefore I reluctantly pass over his decorative work for the hall of the hotel "Slaviansky Bazaar," Moscow, in which he represents an assemblage of Slav musicians, Russian, Polish and Czech; his "Arrest of a Young Political Offender," "The Confessional," and other pictures. Probably by the end of the XIX. century he had given out the best that was in him. At any rate, I know too little of his recent painting to offer an opinion upon it. Of his picture entitled "What a vast expanse!" (1903), Stassov says: "In consequence of the unsuccessful treatment of certain details of gesture and costume the public has been unjust to this picture; it did not take in the beauty of the landscape—the water—and, what is far more important, it failed to see the wonderfully warm-hearted and masterly handling of a contemporary problem; the youth of Russia who have not lost the courage of soul and glad hopefulness of heart which overcomes their poverty. Repin is the only artist who would have thought of expressing all this."



Rept '11 J

COSSACKS WRITING TO THE SULTAN OF TURKEY

Alexander III Museum, Petrograd



· Of his portraits I shall have something to say in my chapter on portraiture.

If I have not spoken so far of the part which women have played in the progress of Russian art it is not because they have been inactive in this respect. Russian women were never completely debarred from the educational privileges accorded to men. In 1854, Sophia V. Soukhovo-Kobylin received a travelling scholarship from the Academy of Arts. Other distinctions followed; but it was not until 1871 that women were received as students at the Academy schools, where they usually numbered about fifty, although since the beginning of this century, their numbers have probably increased. The Moscow School of Art soon followed the example of Petrograd; but the majority of women artists have studied in private schools and studios which abound in the capitals, and are now to be found in all the provincial cities \*

Elisabeth Bohm (b. 1843) made a reputation by her water-colour sketches of children and animals. Midway in her career she developed great skill in cutting out silhouettes which became the rage. Her children are as dainty and natural as those of Kate Greenaway, but she has a wider imaginative range.

Elizabeth Bohm is at her best with children, but Emilia Shanks (b. 1857) is the painter of girls at the pigtail and pinafore stage of existence. She is a

\* Among the most frequented have been the school of Baron Stiglitz and Princess Teneshiev's studio where Repin taught. At Moscow there is the Stroganov school, and others too numerous to mention.

somewhat prosaic realist, but there are admirably expressive faces to be found among her school scenes. Ellen D. Polenov (1850-1898) had more originality than either of the preceding artists. In her fantastic and ultra-Russian illustrations to folk-tales she foreshadowed the new art. She was one of the group of artists who frequented the Mamantov estate at Abramstovo, and not being satisfied with the wooden toys and other articles which the children were carving in the local school, she went on a journey into the hearts of Russia and collected the best models of the old national art. With these examples before them the pupils at Abramstovo soon became famous for their work even beyond the borders of Russia.

Marie Bashkirtsiev (1860-1884) was Russian in name only. Brought up abroad, and trained in Julien's studio, even before she formed her romantic friendship with Bastien Lepage, she was thoroughly French in her virile technique and the principles of her art, and the Luxembourg harbours the best example of her work—the group of bourgeois children called “The Meeting.” Baroness Elena Vrangél, Olga Kochetov, Catherine Krassnoushkin and Rina Brailovskiy belong to the older school of painting.

The new art is represented by Natalia Goncharov, who paints severe Orthodox saints and, more recently, scenes from Russian life in futile imitation of Gauguin, or Larionov. Vera Joukov inclines to greater realism expressed in a decorative style

## CHAPTER VIII

### PAINTING (*continued*).

#### A Great Military Painter, Vassily Verestschagin.

**A**NOTHER great artist of the national and realistic group is Vassily Vassilievich Verestschagin (1842-1904). I have already made brief reference to the acres of canvas used by other painters for the representation in an official light of the battlefields of the past : vast arenas with their orderly movements, their brilliant colouring, their flashes of steel in the sunlight and puffs of silvery smoke appearing in appropriate places. Rarely indeed, is death permitted to intrude its presence in these panegyrical pictures in which a field-marshal on a prancing white horse takes the centre of the stage, but sometimes a few corpses are disposed in reposeful attitudes amid a picturesque lumber of gun-carriage wheels, broken swords and dead horses. The didactic school of the 'sixties, hating war, ignored its representation, and the painters of half a century later, only touched the fringe of the subject with such "tendency" pictures as Savitsky's "Off to the Front," a dramatic, but sufficiently obvious, protest against compulsion, or Sourikov's "Conquest of Siberia," and Miloradovich's "The Defence of the

Troitsa-Sergievo Monastery"—which belong rather to the panorama of history than of war. We shall look in vain in Russia for a series of military painters such as France possessed in Raffet, Charlet, Pils, Horace Vernet, Morot and Alphonse de Neuville. It is indeed a fact that singularly little evidence of martial ardour can be found in Russian art and literature, and this is a strong testimony in favour of the idea that the Russians, fundamentally a pastoral people, are warlike from necessity rather than natural impulse.

"Russian history, as compared with that of Western Europe, is the despair of those accustomed to theatrical pose," writes the Slavophil leader, Constantine Aksakov. "It contains no pompous phrases, no sumptuous decorative effects such as dazzle us in Western history. Individuals have played comparatively small parts in the pages of our history; for pride is the indispensable attribute of personalities, and pride is not one of our characteristics. We can point to no chivalry with all its glamour and bloodshed; to no inhuman religious propaganda; to no crusades—in short, to none of those continual scenic effects and dramatic situations characteristic of Western Europe." Another great Slavophil, Alexis Khomiakov, commenting on these lines some seventy years ago, spoke these prophetic words. "If there be a brotherhood of the nations, a sense of truth and justice—not merely an impalpable shadow, but something vital and enduring—then the

moral supremacy does not belong to Germany, with her militarism and aristocratic ideals, but to the plebeian and agricultural Slavs."

Therefore it is not surprising that when the evolution of the national ideal in art produced a great war painter in Russia, he should be the representative of the individual soldier, his suffering and heroism, rather than the eulogist of the successful general and his staff in all the "pomp and circumstance" of victory.

Verestschagin was born on October 26th, 1842, at Lioubets, in the Government of Novgorod. Following the traditions of so many Novgorodian families his parents sent him to the School for Naval Cadets in Petrograd. Here, Verestschagin remained until 1860, when he passed out at the head of the list. On leaving the Naval College he declared his determination to devote himself exclusively to art. Naturally, he met with some opposition from his parents, who hoped that shortness of means might bring him to reason. Verestschagin, however, entered the Academy of Arts, where he stayed about two years, and won a silver medal for an oil painting, "Ulysses Slaying the Lovers of Penelope."

At that time the young generation was beginning to be agitated by the progressive ideas which were finding their way into Russian literature and journalism. Protest against classicism in art was already in the air, and then, as throughout his career, the liberal spirit appealed to Verestschagin's tempera-

ment. We hear of his reading many Western books on political and social questions, including Buckle's "History of Civilisation in England," and being regarded as a dangerous radical in consequence. His was not the nature to endure for long the fetters of academic tradition, and in 1863, although his technical equipment was far from complete, he started for a prolonged journey in the Caucasus.

Verestschagin first visited Tiflis, where, in order to maintain himself, he accepted a situation as drawing-master to the family of General Kartsiev, military governor of the district. He was also obliged to teach in schools and private families. "It would be difficult to describe how hard I worked, and how I made use of every spare moment to fill my sketch-books," he said in later years. "Only my youth and complete independence prevented my being entirely crushed by the number of lessons I gave." He succeeded in making a prodigious quantity of sketches from life and nature, many of which were afterwards reproduced in a French publication "Le Tour du Monde," with letterpress by Verestschagin himself.

In 1864 his father relented, and sent him the means to visit Paris, where he went direct to the studio of the celebrated painter, Gérôme. The latter was impressed by the young man's outdoor sketches, and accepted him as a pupil. At the same time Verestschagin entered the Ecole des Beaux Arts, where he worked under Bida, who was then engaged upon his

famous illustrations for the Gospels. In the summer of 1865, Verestschagin again visited the Caucasus, and on his return, both Gérôme and Bida were astonished at the contents of his sketch-books. The latter urged him strongly to have recourse to colour, since as a draughtsman his workmanship was now almost perfect. At this time Verestschagin seems to have experienced a kind of timidity as regards colour, or an ascetic renunciation of its beauties. He worked continually in pencil, and even his largest studies, such as "Dukhobortsi at Prayer," and "A Procession of Religious Fanatics in Shousha," were exclusively carried out in this medium. His drawing, somewhat hard and literal, was extraordinarily accurate in detail, and showed a penetrating observation that foreshadowed the great realist to come.

Verestschagin avoided the social attractions of Paris life. He led an austere, industrious existence, often working as much as sixteen hours a day. Seeing how intensely Russian he was by nature, and that his was the art which develops best by independent and unremitting outdoor work, it is difficult to understand why Paris exercised so great an attraction for him. Both Gérôme and Bida were free from exaggerated idealism, both saw life from a realistic standpoint, and both felt and expressed the beauty and fascination of the East. In these respects Verestschagin found himself in sympathy with his masters. But essentially they differed widely. Neither of the French artists shared the Russian's peculiarly democratic

attitude towards life and art, neither of them made it their chief aim to express the patient half-unconscious suffering of the masses.

The artist was now ripe for some great independent achievement, and his opportunity was at hand. In 1867 he obtained permission to join the military expedition to Central Asia as a volunteer on the Staff of the Commander, General Kauffmann. He accompanied the force from Orenburg to Tashkent, a journey which he describes as "worse than the galleys," but gladly endured for the sake of the novel experiences it afforded him. On his return to Russia his services were rewarded by the distinguished Order of St. George.

In 1868 the artist took part in organising the Turkestan Exhibition in Petrograd. One room was set apart for his pictures, and at his express desire the public was admitted free of charge. These early paintings created a considerable sensation, partly because the campaign in Central Asia was the topic of the hour, but also because Verestschagin's plain and unadorned representations of war as he had seen it were totally different to what the public had been accustomed to gaze upon in the Hermitage and other galleries. Among the exhibits on this occasion were the famous pictures, "Before the Attack," and "After the Attack." On their first visit to the Exhibition the Emperor Alexander II. and his wife stood long in contemplation before these works. It was probably the first time they had come face to face with

the pitiless actualities of this "game of kings," shorn of all its glamour and officialism. On the closing of the Exhibition General Heinz, the owner of the pictures, presented them to the Emperor, who kept them ever after in his private apartment.

Verestschagin's hatred of war, and his determination to show it in its worst aspect—which happens to be also its truest—proceeds from something deeper than the ordinary humanitarian tendency which has become more common in these days. His innate sympathy for the suffering masses may also have had something to do with his attitude towards war, but its true origin lay deeper still—in his nationality itself. The absence of military ardour in the Russian people as a whole must have struck any one well acquainted with their art and literature. It does not lie in their temperament as it lies in the Gallic, the Anglo-Saxon, or Teutonic character. The Russians have no genuine war-songs, old or new. Their Court-poets have celebrated Russian victories in odes as bombastic and artificial as the battle-pieces of the Court-painters in the Hermitage and the Imperial Palaces. Poushkin, in his celebrated poem, "Poltava," produced something like a stirring military epic. But even he avoided contemporary history, and gave his poem the subdued colouring and glamour that goes with "old, unhappy, far-off things, and battles long ago."

If we glance at the treatment of war in the novels of Tolstoi and other writers, few in

number, who have dealt with the subject in fiction, we shall not find it surrounded by any halo of romance. We shall search in vain for a parallel to such a poem as Tennyson's "Charge of the Light Brigade." The spirit of "Militarism" is commendably absent from Russian poetry, which has never produced a Campbell, a Dibdin, a Körner, or a Béranger, and probably will never, we venture to assert, produce a Rudyard Kipling. The folk-literature shows the same lack, not of courage, but of military enthusiasm. Even in the songs of the Cossacks, the most war-like races of Russia, it is the parting from sweetheart or wife, the chances of death on the field, the anticipation of wounds and suffering, that are dwelt upon, rather than the triumphant return of the warrior, or the joy and exultation of slaughter. The Russian fights with dogged courage, and dies with fatalistic resignation; but he goes to his fate open-eyed, seeing the literal truth of warfare, and incapable of intoxicating himself with visions of glory and ambition. It is the cross upon the lonely field, not the marshal's baton in his knapsack, that the Russian soldier keeps before him as he marches to the front. This unromantic and literal view of war finds its most striking expression in Verestschagin's pictures. Probably only a Russian could have seen and represented it with such austere truthfulness, without the least temptation to borrow from the imagination a few splendid trappings wherewith to conceal its hideous nakedness.

In 1869 Verestschagin returned to the East, and

crossed the Kirghiz Steppes to the very borders of China, incurring many risks on the journey. He returned to Europe in 1871, and settled in Munich, where he remained three years, engaged upon a series of important pictures. During this period his painting underwent a curious revolution in one particular. For a long time Verestschagin entirely eschewed pigment in any form, and his first pictures of the Turkestan campaign were dry and sombre. Now he developed suddenly into a brilliant colourist. It was as though he had cast off a neutral-tinted domino, and revealed himself in a dress of vivid and varied hues. At the same time he let the sunlight into his landscapes, and drew altogether closer to life and nature. He had penetrated into the very soul of the East, and now, one by one, he struck all the dominant notes of Oriental life in such works as "The Opium-Eaters," "The Dervishes," "The Beggar of Samarkand," "At the Door of Tamerlane," and many other pictures which made up a great series under the general title of "Poèmes Barbares."

In 1873 some of his pictures were shown at the Crystal Palace. They attracted a great deal of attention, although criticism was not altogether favourable. Popular art in England was the reverse of realistic at that moment. In 1874 he opened an exhibition in Petrograd, the first exhibition in Russia which can be described as popular in the fullest sense of the word. The public flocked to it in such numbers that the police had to let in small groups at a time, the rest

waiting patiently in the passages, and even in the street, a scene never before witnessed in the Russian capital.

Among the pictures which created the greatest sensation were those painted, or at least sketched, during the Turkestan campaign the terrible and ironical "Apotheosis of War," dedicated "To all great Conquerors, past, present and to come"; shows a pyramid of human skulls, on which is perched a flock of carrion-crows. The poignant tragedy, "Left Behind," depicts a wounded soldier lying helpless on the edge of the desert, forgotten by his comrades, who have marched away beyond the distant stream. The sun is setting behind the hills in the background, and already the birds of prey are hovering over their victim. The peaceful beauty of the landscape accentuates the horror which is of man's making. It was impossible to look at this picture without being overwhelmed with pity and indignation that these things should be. Another remarkable picture belonging to this period was "The Presentation of the Trophies." The scene is laid in the Palace of Samarkand, of which the architectural details are reproduced with great exactitude. In a gallery near the throne-room the Emir stands contemplating a pile of human heads, which have been tossed on the ground as carelessly as a heap of melons. The prince is in the act of turning over one head with his foot in order to scan its features at his ease. Around him wait a group of courtiers in gorgeous attire, with impassive Oriental faces.



# BLESSING THE DEAD

*Rev. Fr. J. J. McManus, S.J.*

*Continued from p. 11*



The exhibition had not been open many days before a few influential officers entered a protest against certain pictures which, they declared, represented the Russian Army in an unfavourable light. Verestschagin was a man of such strength of character that in an ordinary way he would have held out against these trivial attacks. Coming at a time, however, when he was over-worked, he destroyed three of the offending pictures, in a fit of nervous irritability, among them the famous "Left Behind". The composer, Moussorgsky, embodied his impressions of this picture in one of his most realistic and touching songs.

Speaking of Verestschagin's position at this period of his career Stasov says "All he painted in 1872 and part of 1873 attained the highest level of technique; but as regards sentiment, dramatic force, and purpose, the work of 1871 still remained unsurpassed."

Always thirsting for new adventures, Verestschagin quitted Petrograd before his exhibition was closed, intending to travel across Asia to Japan. He ended, however, by remaining in India. Hardly had he left Russia before he was offered a professorship at the Academy of Arts, which he refused on the grounds that he considered "all official positions and distinctions absolutely inimical to the interests of art." But although he was indifferent to such honours, he was by no means indifferent to the ultimate fate of his works. It was never Verestschagin's aim to paint isolated pictures. His mind

and temperament were too complex to be expressed in anything less than a series of works. Between the pictures of his various periods there is always a close connection, therefore it was highly important for the true significance of his works that they should be kept together and seen in juxtaposition.

In March, 1876, he returned to Europe on account of his health, and built himself a modest villa with two large studios, at Maisons-Lafitte, near Paris. "My impressions," he wrote to Stassov, "are beginning to crystallise into two series of pictures—two poems. One short series, 'A Poem in Brief,' as I call it; the other extending perhaps to twenty or thirty pictures. I have a large canvas in hand, 'The Snows of the Himalayas,' the first number of my 'Poem in Brief.' All my pictures are already before me as though they actually lived." Many of the "Indian Poems" were finished at Maisons-Lafitte, among them "The English Envoys Presenting Themselves to the Great Mogul in His Palace at Agra," "The Procession of English and Native Grandees at Jeypore, during the Visit of the Prince of Wales in 1875," and other pictures dealing with Anglo-Indian history. Stassov considers these the least satisfactory of all the artist's works. "Verestschagin," he says, "never showed any capacity for penetrating the past and re-incarnating historical events or the sentiments of people who lived in days and countries remote from his own. He excelled as a painter of contemporary life. What he saw with

his own eyes he could reproduce with extraordinary actuality. What stirred his emotions—the visible tragedies of daily existence—awoke also the fullest measure of his power and genius.”

While he was still busy with these gorgeous scenes from Oriental life, rumours of war were in the air. On the outbreak of the Turko-Bulgarian War, Verestschagin abandoned all he had in hand, and hastened to the seat of hostilities. He corresponded frequently with his friend, Stassov, and describes with touching pathos the awful sights he witnessed during the campaign. the frequent mutilation of dead and dying Russians by the Turks, the winter hardships patiently endured, the episodes, which, reproduced in his pictures and sketches, afterwards filled all Europe with compassion and horror.

He returned to Paris in 1878, and in a year and a half completed nearly twenty pictures of the Bulgarian campaign, thus outdoing all his previous feats of rapid workmanship. “These pictures, the fruit of his maturity,” says Stassov, “seem to be painted with his heart’s blood, and his very nerve fibre.” The freezing sentinel depicted in the triptych “All Quiet in the Shipka Pass,” “The Graves at Shipka,” and “Blessing the Dead,” are unsurpassable for poignant emotion and relentless realism. The tragic significance of his pictures in Turkestan, the splendour of his Indian scenes, pale before the force and fire which animate these representations of the war in Bulgaria. In 1881-1882 he exhibited these works all

over Europe, and this was the period of his greatest and most sensational renown

From the close of the Russo-Turkish campaign until the declaration of the war with Japan—a period of about twenty-six years—Verestschagin saw no more active service. He still travelled, however, especially in Palestine and Syria, and a series of pictures, mostly dealing with Biblical subjects, was the outcome of these journeys

Deprived of contemporary incidents from which to draw material for his chief study, Verestschagin turned his attention to that epic period in national history, Napoleon's invasion of Russia in 1812. Tolstoi had already made use of this dramatic chapter of Russian history in his colossal novel, "Peace and War." Verestschagin treated it from an equally original and realistic point of view. He began by collecting all manner of new documentary evidence, and made a comprehensive study of the chief figure in the drama, carefully excluding "all inclination towards the legendary." Externally, Verestschagin represents Napoleon quite differently from any of his predecessors. The conventional grey overcoat and cocked hat in which he could not possibly have survived a Russian winter, are replaced by a long sable mantle and a cap with ear lappets. The series of fifteen pictures entitled "Napoleon in Russia," was exhibited at the Grafton Galleries in London in 1898. The pictures were received with interest, but they did not carry the same conviction as those of

Verestschagin's earlier periods. The same criticism seems to apply to them which Stassov delivered upon the "Indian Poems"; that in spite of his care, thoughtfulness and attention to archæological detail, Verestschagin was not at ease in the past precisely because he had no imagination.

The "1812" series possesses a purely literary value, but for the most part these pictures leave us cold, and make no powerful emotional appeal, such as compels our sympathy in his first-hand experiences of the Turkestan and Bulgarian campaigns. Some falling off in his customary perfection of technique was also observable, as though the artist was at last wearing out his colossal energy and power of taking pains. With this series and some important studies—mostly of mountain scenery—in South Russia, Verestschagin's great work as an artist may be said to have terminated. What the stimulus of the Russo-Japanese War might have urged him to accomplish it is impossible to divine, for he perished in the Russian flagship *Petropavlovsk* when she struck a mine at the entrance to the harbour of Port Arthur, on April 12, 1904. But at sixty-two it is reasonable to suppose that he had given out the best that was in him. He himself must have felt a pang of disappointment that his life-work had failed of its object. How bitter would have been the sense of failure at the present moment!

Comparing Verestschagin with other military painters of the nineteenth century, we are struck by the

justness of the Russian's outlook, and by the absence of all false patriotism. He holds no brief for any army, but raises his voice in protest against inhumanity and cold-blooded cruelty wherever he sees it. In his genius lies something often lacking in great artists: a profound sympathy with the needs and questions of his own day. He resembles his compatriot Tolstoi in that he accepts no traditions of art, no social conventions, no respect of nationality; and the profound contemporary feeling displayed in his pictures finds its counterpart in the works of the great novelist. "Verestschagin's pictures," said the painter Kramskoi, "are a more valuable possession to Russia than any territorial acquisitions."

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## CHAPTER IX

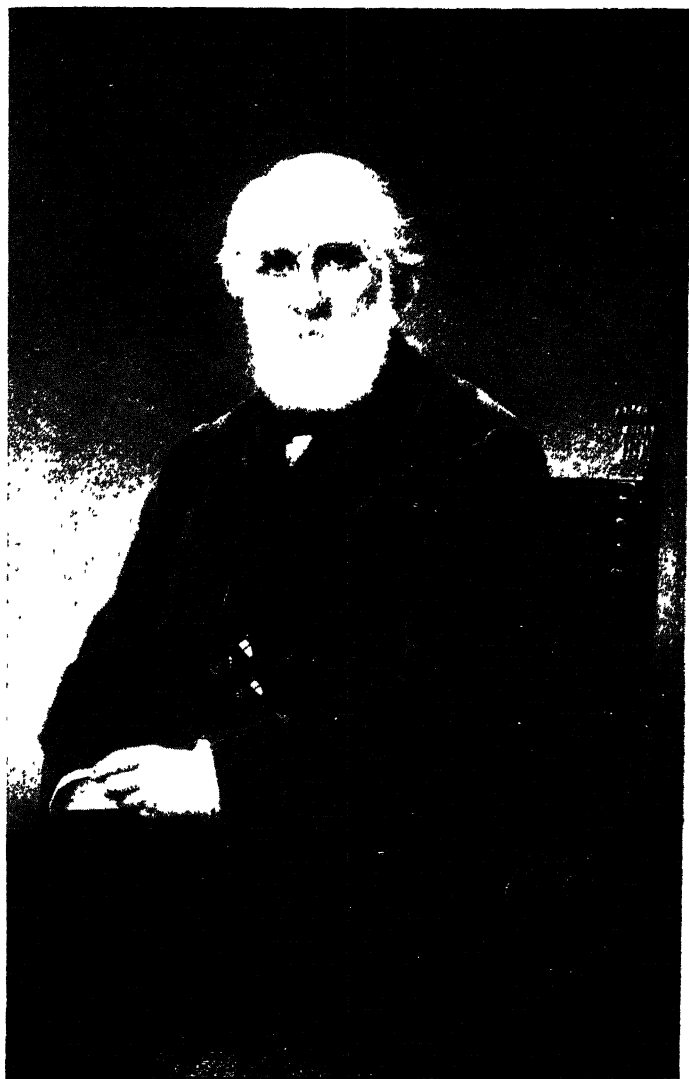
### PAINTING (*continued*)

Portraiture. Kramskoi. Kharlamov. Serov. Repin.  
Historical paintings after Schwartz. Gé Sourikhov.  
Vasnetsov.

WE have seen that Russia had no portrait painters in the past such as Germany possessed in Holbein, the Netherlands in Rubens and Van Dyck, France in the Clouets, and England in Sir Peter Lely. Such portraiture as grew out of the Byzantine art was quite naïve and unimportant, since it ignored the living model, and could therefore make no pretensions to close observation. But from the moment that art broke away from tradition and became secularized and realistic almost all the leading men of their day did admirable work in this branch of painting. Some of the best pictures which Kramskoi exhibited in the early years of the Society of Travelling Exhibitions, of which he was the founder, were portraits: two of Tolstoi (1873) which Stassov considered among the best in the whole Tolstoyan gallery, because of their strength and simplicity, a full-length portrait of the landscape painter Shishkin (1874), in which, laden with the paraphernalia of his work, he is standing on

the edge of one of the forests which he loved and painted with such intimate knowledge, intently watching some distant effect, a picturesque figure, clear-cut against the evening sky ; Lavrovskaya, the singer, in a moment of triumph on the platform, surrounded by an admiring crowd (1879) ; Samoilov, the actor , Grigorovich, the novelist ; and the amazingly lifelike portrait of the painter Litovchenko (1879), a thin dark man with a flowing black beard and fiery eyes that rivet the attention of the spectator ; astonishingly veracious, and dignified as the work of a Venetian master. Besides the above, Kramskoi painted a brilliant, though more conventional, picture of the present Dowager Empress, Marie Feodorovna, in her Coronation Robes.

In 1875 Alexander Kharlamov (b 1842), an artist who lived a good deal in Paris, and whose work bears the stamp of various foreign influences, painted two fine portraits, one of Tourgeniev, the other of the author's friend, the singer, Mme. Viardot-Garcia. In these works he seems to have been fortunately inspired, for his favourite studies of Italian boys and girls are pleasing but commonplace things. Yaroshenko's picture of the philosopher and critic, Vladimir Soloviev (1853-1900) stands out among a mass of averagely good portraits produced in Russia towards the close of the last century. A portrait of Mme. Morosov by N. C. Bodarevsky (1850), dated 1896, is a very brilliant Velasquez-like painting of a beautiful Russian type. But undoubtedly the most gifted of



*Князь (1)*

*Левый (1) М. М. Петров*

PORTRAIT OF THE NOVELIST TOUGENIEV



the younger portrait painters was Valentine Alexandrovich Serov (1861-1911), the son of the composer of "Judith" and "The Power of Evil."

Serov was a pupil of Repin. One of his most striking works is the portrait of his father, who died when the boy was about seven years old. With the doubtful assistance of some very poor photographs he reconstructed from memory a vivid picture which those who knew the musician have pronounced an admirable likeness as regards expression and attitude \*

Stassov says that the thoughtful abstracted look in the eyes is wonderfully life-like. The colouring is grey and muddy, a fault which the young artist corrected in his later works. Serov was equally successful with men and women, and sitters of all ages. His portrait of Rimsky-Korsakov,† absorbed in the study of a score, is a powerful and natural piece of work, the outcome of intimate knowledge of the man and his moods. A young girl, a daughter of the wealthy art patron, Mamontov, has the charm of simplicity and sincerity. An equestrian portrait of the Grand Duke Paul Alexandrovich and a bust portrait of the Emperor Nicholas II, are far above the usual average of such official works. The fascinating picture of two little boys leaning on a rail, one gazing out to sea with the rapt look of a born adventurer, the other turning with a wistful expression, as though he had heard an unwelcome summons to come in-

\* This portrait is reproduced in my book "The Russian Opera"

† Erroneously attributed in "The Russian Opera" to Repin

doors, is a rival to the Mamontov portrait in its fresh and vernal qualities. Then in a totally different key there is the strong, impressive painting of Lesskov—who wrote under the name of Saltykov (1894)—and a quiet thoughtful study of the landscape painter Levitan (1893). Near to it in the Alexander III Museum, Petrograd, hangs Serov's brilliant portrait of the actress, Ida Rubinstein.

Serov is undoubtedly one of the most masterly and "professional" of the Russian painters. He took up his technique from the point to which Repin had brought it—a high degree of virtuosity. He died at the age of forty-six, but was a prolific artist, second only to Repin in his output of portraits, and it must be acknowledged that he paints women with greater distinction and insight than his master; although no portrait painter is quite as sympathetic to the plain, intelligent woman as Repin. Serov's sketch of Pavlova "on tiptoe for a flight" has a flower-like grace. As the continuator of realistic art he has one recent successor—Koustodiev.

A fine portrait is Golovin's picture of Shaliapin in the superb robe of cloth-of-gold in which he appears in the coronation scene in "Boris Godounov." Treated archaically in a clever way, it has something of the flatness of a Holbein portrait, with all the details of the costume most carefully observed and recorded.

In the number, interest, and deep insight of his portraits Repin may be compared to Watts, bearing in mind that their artistic convictions and style of

painting were wide apart ; the Russian tending to realism, and the Englishman to idealism One other quality they have in common . both painted their sitters with that complete self-oblivion which is a matter of conscience with the great portraitists ; so that there is no monotony in their work as is often the case with that of more subjective painters Posterity will owe to Repin a magnificent achievement in his strong, vivid, intimate records of all the great personalities of his time An age of powerful personalities seems always to have generated a portrait painter equal to this task, and Repin has been the contemporary of some of Russia's noblest spirits. The portraits which he painted during the 'eighties were, says Stasov, " closely allied to those of Velasquez, in colour, relief, power, and the remarkable truth with which he gave expression to the eyes." He painted Tolstoi in many attitudes, and at varying periods of his life two portraits in the Tretyakov Gallery date from 1887 ; in one the writer is seated in an armchair with a book resting on his knee, and this is, I think, the simplest and most sincere of all Tolstoi's portraits , the second is an outdoor study of Tolstoi at the plough. More popular than either of these is the full length picture in the Alexander III. Museum, which represents the author of " Anna Karenina " as an old *monnik*, bareheaded and barefooted, his hands tucked into the belt of his blouse, with the thumbs sticking out prominently, an ugly, though possibly characteristic, attitude From one

pocket a book is protruding, which rather unkindly gives away the elaborate simplicity of the pose as a "horny handed son of toil."

Repin enjoys painting his friends in a whole series of studies, and of the art critic, Vladimir Stassov, he made at least five portraits, all remarkably successful. One small picture of Stassov with the air of a stalwart "bogatyry,"\* dressed in national costume—a scarlet shirt and high boots, standing with one foot upon the first step of a rustic staircase as though in the act of ascending, with a background of sombre green bushes, is a beautiful bit of colour, and as carefully finished as a Meissonier. Another fine picture of this vigorous personality was painted in two sittings at Dresden †. A third portrait dates from the beginning of this century, and shows Stassov as a hale and energetic octogenarian, wearing a big shabby fur-lined coat with a fur cap on his white locks. He has just entered the room on a frosty day, and the blood is tingling in nose, ears and cheeks. This picture, which suffered at first from a too literal insistence upon this rubicund effect, so that the epic Stassov was thereby transformed into a conventional Father Christmas, has now greatly mellowed and become a most expressive and truthful likeness.

Among literary men, Repin has painted Pisemsky, author of "The Troubled Sea," the historian, Sergius Soloviev, the poet Fet (Shenshin), Garslun, and

\* Bogatyry, an epic hero

† The first sitting lasted nine hours, the second six



Scene (1-1)

*Petrarke III Museum Petr...*

SHATTAPIN AS BORIS GODOUNOV



others, and among painters, Mikeshin, Gé, Sourikov, and Massoyedov. To the musicians of Balakirev's circle, with whom he was intimate, and among whom I often met him at the house of mutual friends, he has done a great service in showing future generations what manner of men they were. His portraits of Cui, Glazounov (in his youth) Borodin and Moussorgsky are such as could only be painted by an artist of genius who knew his models *au fond*. The portrait of Moussorgsky has indeed evoked much criticism, on account of what is often called its brutal realism. It was painted very shortly before the composer's death in the Military Hospital, poverty, physical agony, alleviated by drugs; the sting of artistic disappointments lulled to temporary rest by stimulants, all the tragedy of a sensitive, creative soul worn out with the long struggle against the world's stupidity gazes out at us from this poignant and distressful picture. It is the picture of a wreck, certainly, but not a "sheer hulk"; for in those tired, bloodshot eyes still sits the soul of the man who created "Boris Godounov" and the beautiful enthusiastic spirit of Dositheus in "Khovantstchina." Personally, I am grateful to Repin that he has given us the truth. Better this sad, slovenly, broken genius than any insincere remembrance of the manicured, Moussorgsky, the foppish guardsman, before the passionate desire to fulfil his ideals had driven him forth upon the open sea of life which, while it submerged him physically, saved him for the accomplishment of his imperishable aspirations.

Repin's portraits of women include one of the Countess Mercy-Argenteau, probably the first propagandist of Russian music in western Europe, Mme Lioudmilla Shestakov, Glinka's sister\*; a life-like picture of the philanthropist, Nadejda Stassov, which bears out her brother's remark as to Repin's power of giving expression to the eyes in his portraits; Baroness Iksoul, which is unhappily dated by the ultra-fashionable costume, the polonaise and tight-waisted basque-bodice, the small bonnet with voluminous strings, and the veil bisecting the face from ear to ear just under the nose—all of which was very *chic* in 1889, but which now provokes a smile whenever we look this direct and veracious full-length portrait of one of the leaders of the feminine movement in Russia. A masterly portrait of la Duse is full of the temperament—of the sitter

Repin painted inimitable portraits of two patrons of Russian art: Belaiev—the enthusiastic supporter of the national school of music, and founder of the publishing house in Leipzig—stares you in the face from the canvas; generous, autocratic, not to say choleric, a little too conscious of his purchasing power to attain real refinement, a speaking likeness of the man who both helped and hindered the art he loved. P. M. Tretyakov, who gave the splendid collection of pictures and the mansion that houses them to the

\* The interesting picture of Glinka, an invalid propped up on pillows, working at his second opera, "Russian and Lioudmilla," is of course reconstructed from other portraits and other people's reminiscences

town of Moscow, was a very different kind of Mécenas. The son of a Moscow tradesman, he received a poor elementary education, but as his wealth increased he was not satisfied merely to acquire pictures which pleased him, or to purchase them entirely on the advice of experts. His ambition was to put together a collection which should illustrate the evolution of the national idea in painting, and he developed an acute *flair*, and a courageous and independent judgment. From Repin's portrait of him we receive the impression of a grave, reserved, modest man, with that look in his eyes that we associate with the untiring contemplative gaze of a great anatomist. This connoisseur undoubtedly observed long and silently before he made up his mind about the merits of a picture.

With the sole exception of Schwartz, the Russian painters of the XIX century were distinctly lacking in the historical sense. The carefully arranged scenes of Gé strike a false note. Take for example his overpraised picture of "Peter the Great remonstrating with his son at Peterhof," in which the meticulously careful painting of marble floors, table-covers and chairs do not atone for a complete lack of psychological interest. A few weeks after this interview took place the unhappy Tsarevich met with a terrible and mysterious death in the fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul, as some believe, at his father's instigation, but here is no hint of a situation pregnant with tragedy. The young man hangs his head, the Tsar

sits scowling, but motionless. Surely such self-control was quite foreign to the nature of Peter the Great? He might be a heavy father in the last act of a domestic comedy, scolding a young scapegrace before writing a cheque to pay his debts. History according to Gé, is not very convincing

In "A Wedding celebrated in the Ice Palace," Yakobi (1834—1905) paints the ostentatious and vulgar life of the Court of the Empress Anne in a vulgar way.

Vassily Ivanovich Souvikov (b. 1848), reconstructs the past with real knowledge and insight, and has emotional qualities wanting in Gé and Yakobi. His picture of the "Boyarín Morosovov being carried to Execution," shows that, like Repin and Moussorgsky, he had studied the Russian populace to some purpose. The tragic figure of the fanatical Morosova, preaching the tenets of the Old Believers, as she is dragged over the snow in a rough sledge to her cruel doom; the varied attitude of the crowd, some of the boyards watching her with malicious satisfaction, others laughing stupidly, while the majority of the poorer people regard her with respect and pity; the admirable figures of a beggar "idiotic for Christ's sake," and a female pilgrim, both giving their blessing as she goes by—this play of emotions, this assemblage of types, make up an effective and dramatic picture. Although "The Execution of the Streltsi" (1881), another picture from the history of the XVII. century, lacks the interest of a tragic central figure, such as

the Boyarin Morosov, the crowd of despairing men and women gathered at the *Lobnoe Miesto*,\* outside the Kremlin walls, stirs the spectator to pity. The fantastic and sinister outline of the church of Vassily Blajenny forms an appropriate background to the scene of woe and terror. Less harrowing, but more touching, is Sourikov's picture of "Menshikov in Exile" (1883). The banished statesman with his son Alexander, and his two young daughters Mary and Alexandra, are gathered round the table in his wretched log-hut at Berezov. The younger girl is reading aloud from the Scriptures. The chief pathos of the picture lies less in the gloomy broken down exile than in the pale sweet girl crouching by his side. Mary, who was only sixteen when she followed her father to Siberia, had been betrothed to the young Emperor Peter II, before Menshikov's downfall. She had seen her mother die of grief on the journey, and in her wistful face, we see the shadow of past sorrows, and the premonition of her own early death.

Victor Vasnetsov (b. 1848), as intensely national in sentiment as Repin, but drawn to the mystic and legendary rather than to the concrete aspect of things, painted the *Vitiazy*, or Knights of Old Russia, with splendid vigour and imagination. The "Three Warriors," who have just drawn rein, and sit their wild hairy horses like centaurs, while they gaze over the Steppe, alert and ready for the foe, are certainly not Galahads or courtly Lancelots, but rough,

\* The place of execution

sturdy champions of Christendom against the heathen tribes, the Pechenegs, the Drevlyans, and Polovtzi, when as yet the new faith had hardly had time to obliterate all remembrance of Perun the Thunderer and their own Slavonic deities. Another fine type of hero has been incarnated for us by Vasnetsov, in a scene inspired by some lines in the famous "Epic of the Army of Igor." A solitary figure, armed *cap-a-pie*, astride a great white horse, who, riding over the Steppe, has suddenly come upon a former field of conflict, and is lost in contemplation of a stone, whereon is inscribed the record of a "battle long ago." A murderous fight; for the monotonous expanse of bogland, sweeping upward to meet a sunset sky, broken only by outcropping boulders of rock, still shows skulls and bones gleaming in the rough grass; while a dismal group of carrion crows, just become aware of this unusual human apparition, begin to flap their wings in flight. These are the elements of a picture of strange and mournful charm, which wakes echoes of the old *byliny*, and is steeped in what Scott called "the grammaryc of romance." In the same mood Vasnetsov painted his "Bayan" (The Bard), seated on the summit of a *Kurgan*, or barrow, in the region of the Dneiper, the minstrel with frenzied inspiration is singing and accompanying himself on the *gusslee*--the horizontal harp of the Russians--and holding enthralled a group of warriors around him. From mediæval history to the realms of pure fantasy was but a step, and Vas-



*Lavrov (1911)*

AFTER PRINCE IGOR'S DEFEAT

*I. G. Galkin, Moscow*



nietsov painted a whole series of legendary pictures during the eighties. "Little Helen," "Ivan Tsarevich and the Grey Wolf," "Sirin and Gamayoun," and others less interesting. "Stassov, as an uncompromising realist, is severe in his judgment of these works, which he describes as "weak and fanciful." Perhaps he grudged Vasnietsov to the service of the past, in any form, since the artist's two early works, the touching picture of a poor old couple trudging over the frozen Neva called "Changing Quarters" (1876), and the group of people standing in the wet to read the latest "News of the War" (1878), showed that he could have competed with any of his contemporaries as a painter of every day life. On the other hand, Stassov was enthusiastic in his praise of the frescoes which Vasnietsov painted for the Historical Museum in Moscow about 1880, illustrating "The Stone Age."\* He compares them with a similar work by the French artist Ferdinand Cormon, greatly to the advantage of the Russian. In these scenes from the debut of humanity there is immense vigour. Stassov compares these primitive folk to the inhabitants "of a vast cage in a zoological garden," fighting, dancing, shouting in furious wrath or uncouth joy."

But in none of these spheres of art was Vasnietsov destined to fulfil the crowning achievement of his life. Doubtless his migration from Petrograd to Moscow, and its picturesque associations with the past, accounts

\* A frieze on a great scale, representing primitive sport, domestic life and a mammoth hunt

for his change of style from *genre* to historical and imaginative painting ; but the commission to decorate the new Cathedral of St. Vladimir at Kiev was soon to reveal him as the one man capable of uniting the hallowed traditions of iconography with the technique of an artist who had not disdained to learn what Paris could teach him at a time when the leaders of the New Idealism in France, Puvis de Chavannes and Gustave Moreau, were doing their best work.

Considering the strong influence of the neighbouring East upon the music of modern Russian composers, orientalism plays a comparatively small part in the sister art of painting. Verestschagin was undoubtedly the most assiduous and successful observer of eastern types. Polenov and Semiradsky, whose work we shall consider more fully in the chapter on modern religious art, both studied the Jewish and other eastern races, with the object of ensuring ethnographical correctness in their Biblical scenes, and the former also produced some clever landscapes, reflecting the light and glowing colour of the East. But such a school of Orientalists as was represented in France by Descamps, Marilhat, Delacroix, Fromentin, Regnault and Benjamin Constant, has never come into being in Russia.

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## CHAPTER X

### PAINTING (*continued*)

Neglect of home scenery. Vorobiev and his pupils. Aivazovsky, sea-painter. Native landscape. Kouindjy. Shishkin. Two painters of Spring. Doubovsky. A. Vasnetsov. Levitan. V. Serov.

NATIVE landscape painters were slow to grasp the fact that Russia offered any scenery worth their earnest attention. Until well into the reign of Nicholas I., conventionality and insincerity clung like blighting diseases to the work of nearly all the artists who devoted themselves to this branch of art. Either the Russian painters went abroad for their subjects, or when they began to put tentatively on canvas that which they saw close at hand, they thought it necessary to set it in an artificial light. In these travesties of the truth, dating from the first half of last century, the Steppes are indistinguishable from the Campagna, a street in Moscow suggests Rome, or a sunset on the Neva looks like evening on the Venetian Lagoons. Some critics make an exception for the works of Maxim N. Vorobiev (1787—1855), whose works have a serene Claude-like beauty, and are truer to nature in their colouring, than those of his contemporaries Rabuse and Stchedrin.

A conscientious teacher, Vorobiev educated a whole group of younger artists, some of whom passed on from this first "classic" school of landscape to a transition period of which Baron M. C. Klodt (1832—1902), and Michael Ivanovich Lebediev (1812—1837), were the most interesting representatives. The former painted Russian scenery in a solid stereoscopic kind of way; in his "Ploughed Field," for instance, we can count the furrows and clods over a space of some acres; while a tiresome instinct for the picturesque counteracts the virtues of this painstaking realism. Lebediev had more talent. Before he went to study in Italy a few immature and rather murky views of Petrograd, stood out from the mass of parasitic art of the 'thirties as real efforts to interpret the northern landscape. The pictures he painted in Italy showed the same respect for nature with a vastly improved technique. Unhappily he died in Naples at twenty-five, before he had time to exercise his matured gifts in his native surroundings.

Two other pupils of Vorobiev, the marine painters A. P. Bogoliobov (1824—1896), and Ivan K. Aivazovsky (1817—1900) offer an interesting contrast, the one a conscientious and serious observer of nature, the painter of quiet harbours and estuaries ("The Golden Horn, Constantinople," and "The Mouth of the Neva"); a dexterous and delicate draughtsman of shipping and other "common objects of the sea shore"—he gives grace even to a dredger in the second picture mentioned above; the other an im-

passioned poet of the ocean in its calmest and wildest moods—a Swinburne among painters.

Aivazovsky's first pictures such as "Gourzuf at Night," a study of a picturesque little town on the rocky Crimean seaboard, or "On the Sea Shore," both of which date back to the 'forties, though not devoid of poetic feeling are somewhat strained and theatrical. To this period succeeded a phase of greater freedom, accompanied by a certain violence of colour, as though he had been experimenting in the direction of Turner, although I am not aware that he ever had any opportunity of studying the works of that artist. The crimson welter entitled "The Creation," and "The Deluge," belong to this period. As time went on he grew more temperate and sure in respect of colour; his waves—always superb in form and movement—became more harmonious in the variety of their tones, and infinitely more transparent.

His "Ninth Wave" (Alexander III. Gallery, Petrograd) usually considered his masterpiece, seems to mark the transition between the fantastic colour of his earlier works, and the more truthful vision of the later years. Even here it is the grand *form* of the on-coming wave that strikes us most; the inexorable movement towards the spectator of a volume of water, that fairly takes his breath away. The curious effect of yellow light in the sky, reflected in broken touches of glittering prismatic colour on the waves is not convincing. I have never been able to decide for

myself whether it is meant for sunrise or sunset, or some special phenomenon of light peculiar to the Black Sea. Whether due to the influence of Turner, or to that touch of sensationalism which is characteristic of Russian art when it departs from the sober path of realism, Aivazovsky, in his earlier years, loved to put into his great marine pictures something catastrophic and awe-inspiring. In "The Ninth Wave" the frail raft with its group of despairing mariners serves to emphasize the impotence of humanity in "the mountainous vale of the wave"; in "The Wreck," the masts, still visible, of a ship being sucked down in a throthing eddy, amid the whirl of waves and "an earthquake of sound," enhances the succourless solitude of the scene. Another scene of tempest and terror is "Sheep driven into the Sea by a Storm." A flock, grazing on the sand-dunes, frenzied by the wild wind and blinding spindrift, emulating the Gaddarean swine, are rushing down a steep place violently into the sea. "A Storm at Eupatoria" (Crimea), "The Rainbow," and "A Storm on the Shores of the Black Sea," are all considered fine examples of his art. Novitsky says that Aivazovsky never painted his pictures from nature, but always from memory, and far away from the seaboard. That to some extent must be true of all marine painters who depict the open sea in tempest, for few could endure to spend their days lashed to the mast of a ship in imminent peril of foundering, and must therefore rely upon their imagination backed by

memory. In this connection Mr. Quilter very truthfully observes ; " it is doubtful if an artist consciously refers from nature to art in his best moments." Men of great arranging and inventive power like Michelangelo and Turner, he continues, " prefer to be fascinated, and work straightforwardly in the strength of their impressions." Such an artist was Aivazovsky, subject to the fascination of the sea ; and we can perfectly well understand that when he painted " The Ninth Wave," or " The Wreck," he had no need to watch the ever shifting colour and movement of the great waters as he worked, for these pictures are poems in which the artist has concentrated an amplitude of observation and experience. We realize that their impressive, haunting grandeur is no more spontaneous than the impressiveness of many a great sonnet ; they are rather the aftermath of his passion for the sea. We are very differently affected, however, by many of his later paintings of the Black Sea in all its treacherous moods. It is difficult indeed to believe that these stirring *plein air* performances are merely memorizings of hoarded themes rather than improvisations. Aivazovsky in his sixty years of unbroken activity is said to have produced about five thousand pictures, and in such prolific output there is room for work that is merely perfunctory or a repetition of himself, but personally I have never come across any inferior example of his art. His paintings are pretty widely diffused over the Continent, for he is one of the few Russian artists

whose talent was generally recognized abroad.\* In spite of Muther's absurd condemnation of Aivazovsky as a "*décorateur* for ever seizing upon loud pyrotechnical effects like a Gudin," those who know his work from the 'eighties onward will love it for its suggestive colour, its sense of spaciousness, of movement that outstrips the wind. His pictures are stamped with a great and unmistakable individuality. I remember some twelve years ago—it was in the days of the leisurely horse-bus—passing a picture dealer's shop in the Bayswater Road, and having a sudden vision of breezy skies, of running waves arrow-marked by the wind, and of that wonderful interpenetration of blues and greens of which this artist has the secret. Within a few yards of Westbourne Grove, and the "Universal Provider" my heart instantly "suffered a sea change." "Aivazovsky," I exclaimed to my bewildered fellow-travellers, and promptly got out of the bus. The dealer, who shared my enthusiasm, but declared that the artist's name did not invite constant repetition, told me the pictures were not for sale, but had been left in his care by a gentleman who had gone abroad and wanted them packed and sent after him on a certain date. I might drop in and look at them again if I liked. They refreshed the atmosphere of Queen's Road for about a fortnight, these living, heaving seas, during which time I saw

\* France bestowed on him the Cross of the Legion of Honour, the Florentine Academy included his portrait in the gallery devoted to famous painters in the Pitti Palace, and he was elected a member of the Stuttgart and the Amsterdam Academies.



*Alexander III Museum Petrograd*

THE VINH WAU

*Travels in the*



them frequently, and felt hardly justified in taking a summer holiday, so invigorating, so buoyant, were the moods they inspired

Compared with the works of Aivazovsky those of R. G. Soudovsky (1850-1885), though not lacking in dignity, seem lifeless, saltless, and frigid. His waves would never tingle the blood in your veins if you plunged and swam in them.

But from the sea I must return to the plains and forests of inland Russia. A. I. Kouindjy (1872-1910) denotes a distinct advance upon Shishkin, being one of the first to let a lavish fulness of light—moonlight as well as sunlight—into his pictures. His "Birch Grove"—of which an illustration is given to face p. 196—shows us the stems of silver birches overhanging stagnant water, deep shade in the foreground and a stretch of sward basking in dazzling sunshine. His greens are bright and solid, and decidedly metallic as regards the patches of water-plants in shadow. The treatment is altogether rather heavy, but the effect is strong and brilliant, and no one in Russia before his time had put so much audacity into the painting of glaring sunshine. He has set himself to solve another and more complicated problem of light in "After the Rain," in which a very simple landscape—two low banks with a sluggish stream creeping between them and a little farm perched on the highest point in the middle distance—is bathed in the strange livid light that comes with the first return of the sun after a tempest. A smile is struggling back to the

face of nature, but most of the sky is still inky and full of a sullen electric mood, that is reluctant to be beguiled into gladness. Writing of Kouindjy's "Night on the Dneiper," Kramskoi says: "I have known this picture for a long time, and seen it at all hours of the day, and in every kind of light, and I can safely say that the first time I looked at it I could not get rid of the physical feeling that my eyes were dazzled, as though by real moonlight, and every time I have seen it since, I have the same sensation, accompanied by intense enjoyment of the night with its fantastic light and perfume." The words apply equally well to the "Night in the Ukraine" (1876), a similar scene to "After Rain," but washed with magical, southern moonlight, and recalling Gogol's poetical description of Dikanka: "the whole horizon slumbers. Overhead everything is breathing in the night, all is august and triumphal. In the soul, as in the sky, vast, illimitable spaces are unfolded, a host of silvery visions rise gracefully from its depths . . . The trill of the nightingale of the Ukraine is heard. The moon seems to hang motionless in heaven to hear him. A cluster of white cottages gleam more brightly in the moonrays; their low walls rise up dazzling out of the dark shadows" \*.

Ivan Ivanovich Shishkin (1821—1899) first truly apprehended the beauty that lay around him. The landscape of northern Russia has a poetry which

\* "Evenings on a Farm at Dikanka" Sketches of the Ukraine. Nicholas Gogol (1809-1852)



Копида Г. Г.

А БИРЧУ ГРОВА

Иркутская Галерея Мещеряков



reveals itself slowly to the sympathetic eye. It is far from monotonous in colour, though it may not be able to boast of impressive lines, or majestic masses. The charm and mystery of the forests, the serried ranks of pines in all their gothic grace; the fretted canopy of birch branches, casting dancing shadows, and letting through glittering flecks of light upon the pearly whiteness of their trunks, the moist, mossy patches beneath the trees, where here and there a vivid red fungus shows like an elfin light, eerie pools where once Roussalkas disported in the moonlight—these are the only allurements it has to offer. But then it is endlessly fascinating to watch the gradual transformation of the birch woods, throwing off their nunlike veils of silver-grey, as spring advances, for one of misty green, and shedding their summer beauty in spangles of palest gold, during the brief glory of a Russian autumn. And all this coquettish robing and unrobing is carried on amid the unchanging, dignified sobriety of the pine forests. What wonder that these two kinds of trees—eternal types of masculine and feminine beauty—are endowed in the folk lore of the North, with almost human attributes and individualities?

Into the poetry of the forests Shishkin entered more deeply than any of his predecessors. He was the first close friend they possessed among the painters for, like Rousseau and his disciples at Barbizon, he spent his life in outdoor work. But though he lived just as near to nature as did these inaugurators of

the *paysage intime*, he never discovered, as they did, the existence of light and air. He lacked, too, a sense of colour. His greens are depressingly monotonous. But he drew trees with a wonderful knowledge born of a great tenderness for them—a tenderness that remained tragically inarticulate as regards colour and fragrance. Every leaf and branchlet are carefully delineated, but we suffocate in these airless woods. His drawings and etchings, however, are fresh and living things, while his oil paintings lose less than any others I know in reproduction. When one has lived for a time with good photographs or engravings of Shishkin's masterpieces before one's eyes, imagination supplies many defects of colour, and it is a painful shock to find oneself confronted with the frigid and primly painted originals. He was a prolific painter, the Tretyakov Gallery alone containing twenty-seven pictures, and about eight examples of his black and white work.

Shishkin's real importance in the evolution of Russian landscape was that of a pioneer. He looked at the scenery of his own land with a clear, healthy, prosaic vision, and his work definitely brought to an end all false classicism and romanticism in landscape, turning the attention of his contemporaries to the veracities of home scenery.

E. E. Volkov (b. 1844), repeats some of the faults of Shishkin, giving us the physiognomy of the Russian landscape without its soul. Vladimir D. Orlovsky (b. 1842), painted birch groves in full sunshine. A.K.

Savrasov (1830—1897), was always at his best when interpreting the austere moods of early spring. His picture "Rooks building" created a sensation in 1871. Ivan Ivanovich Endogourov (1861—1899), has treated a similar subject in "The Coming of Spring" (Alexander III. Gallery, Petrograd), a picture which suggests merely the promise of April. The ice is breaking in the stream, but the snow has lost its hard sparkle, and looks soft and woolly. There is a vernal light in the sky, and the first relaxation in all nature is very delicately expressed. Endogourov painted in the Crimea, as well as in Northern Russia and Norway. At the outset of his career J. J. Klever (b. 1850) depicted the forests with far more poetry of vision than Shishkin. To him was revealed their mystery and horror, as well as their tranquil grace. "The Heart of the Forest" (1880), in the Tretyakov Gallery, combines a sense of romantic, legendary enchantment, with a perfectly truthful modern outlook and method "Withered Birch Trees," (1876) in the same collection, is a quiet, melancholy and satisfying example of outdoor work. Unfortunately Klever's pictures fell off in quality as the years advanced, and since the 'eighties it has been impossible to regard him as a serious rival to the fame of Shishkin.

Nicholas N. Doubovsky (1859) won his reputation as a painter of winter effects, by a picture of snow in bright sunlight ( "Winter"), painted in 1884, now in the Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow. But that he

is not "a poet of one mood in all his lays" is proved by his varied choice of subjects: "Morn on the Hills," "Imatra," "Early Spring," "On the Volga," and "A Moment of Calm." He does not shrink from trying to solve some very difficult problems of landscape painting. "Imatra," for example, is an attempt to depict the terrific power and swiftness of the greatest of European rapids. He has wisely only attempted to make a part express the whole, and has just selected the point at which the vast volume of water becoming more restricted in its passage slips like molten green glass over the rounded boulders beneath, or is churned into waves of thick white foam against such jagged rocks as still defy its forces of attrition. "A Moment of Calm" realizes a grand tempestuous effect; one huge roll of dense, white, electrical vapour broods over the whole picture, casting a deep shadow on still water; a patch of uncanny reflected light falls upon a few trees and houses in the distant low-lying landscape, which is revealed just below the edge of the monstrous cloud-form.

A. M. Vasnietsov (b. 1856), brother of the more celebrated Victor, is always expressive of "mood," whether representing the forests of Siberia, or the Ural slopes, the river Kama, or wind rising on the picturesque Dneiper; and most of all in such a dreamy and melancholy work as "An Elegy." Here, near a marble mausoleum overlooking a forlorn lake, and set round with gloomy cypress trees, a forlorn lover



*Inducta (Inducta) M. w. c.*

# CORNFIELD

*Inducta (Inducta) M. w. c.*



sits lost in meditation on a stone bench. Racial sentiment is entirely in abeyance, and the artist has perhaps, felt the *macabre* influence of Böcklin's "Island of the Dead" That this was only a passing phase is evident from his intense sympathy with the Moscow of the XVII. century, which he has reconstructed in such fascinating pictures as "A Street in the Kitai-Gorod" and "The Moskvaretsky Bridge and Water-Gate," in which the quaint and highly characteristic architecture of "timber Russia," and the busy life of the old capital live for us once again. Serge Svietoslavsky (1857) has also done some interesting work in the same line

One of the most important of modern Russian landscape painters is Isaac Ilch Levitan (1861-1900), against whom there is only one reproach to be made; that too often he closed his eyes to the gladness and glory of the world, selecting in preference the sternest and most melancholy aspects of Finno-Russian scenery; grey days, quiet autumnal moods, pale crepuscular effects, rain-washed skies—all seen with a deeply poetic vision, and painted with a breadth and boldness that aroused the hostile criticism of old-fashioned critics who spoke of his pictures as "unfinished sketches," or accused them of being pasty. "The Road to Vladimir" (1889) a wild track leading over a waste of heath, under a great expanse of sky, across which clouds are moving swiftly, brings a sense of boundless space and desolation rather than peace. The journey's end, the lights of home, seem

endlessly deferred, and the one human figure by the roadside looks hopelessly alone and apprehensive. "The Millpond" (1892) is more idyllic. "Eternal Rest" (1894), a little church and graveyard perched on a forsaken hill overlooking a sheet of still water, is profoundly touching in its solemnity and loneliness. When he exchanges his grey mood for one of gold, Levitan paints such astonishingly warm, vivid and polychromatic things as his "Birch Trees in Autumn," and "The Island" (1899) in the Alexander III. Museum.

Levitan created something approaching to a school of landscape painting. In many of his followers we recognise the same outlook upon "the melancholy splendour of the Russian autumn, and the enigmatic attraction of the Russian spring." He brought his art into very close touch with nature. As Benois says of him: "he felt that Nature lives and praises the Creator; his acute ear heard her very heart-beats."

V. Serov was as strong and individual in landscape as in portrait painting, and it seems natural to speak of his work in connection with that of Levitan, for he has the same realistic tendency. The Tretyakov Gallery contains two of his autumnal pictures besides "A Tatar Village in the Crimea," and "A Grey Day" (water-colour). But some of his most characteristic outdoor works such as "The Horse-pond" (water-colour), "The Church at Abramtsievo," and "The Roussalka"—a wistful face peering from out tangled water-plants—are in private collections.



A NORTHERN LANDSCAPE  
*By Lactan*



Alex. Benois (b. 1870), more widely known as a scenic artist, has many moods in landscape. He has painted grave tranquil Russian scenery, the glowing Orient, and formal Versailles. But he belongs more especially to the group of decorative painters, exponents of the new spirit in art, of which a sketch is attempted in the concluding chapter.

## CHAPTER XI

### SACRED ART

Religious art influenced by the literary movements of the XIX. century. Gé Tolstoi's admiration for Gé's work. Kramskoi's "Christ in the Wilderness." The "ethnographical" painters—Polenov and Semiradsky Myasoiédov. Repin.

RELIGIOUS art, so long fenced about by Orthodox prescription, was the last to be reached by the realistic tendency. In the chapters dealing with ecclesiastical art, I have shown that in spite of their bondage to Byzantine tradition, architecture, iconography, and mural decoration, all show, more or less distinctly, some reflection of racial sentiment. The XVII. century brought new ideas to the iconographers, through the medium of engravings from western lands. These fresh impulses were like rain drops about the roots of a dry and etiolated plant. Had they been allowed to do their beneficial work undisturbed, it is possible that religious art in Russia would gradually have put out new shoots, timid burgeonings of independent feeling that might eventually have blossomed into a religious art which should have a character, a colour and fragrance of its own. But this was not to be. The growth of iconography was kept within the limits imposed upon it by a spiritual jurisdiction ; its

flowers were for church use only. Dried and laid aside for ecclesiastical decoration, their fate was to remain sterile and perfumeless as *immortelles* in a mortuary chapel. On the other hand, with the advent of a European Court, the walls and ceilings of the new palaces must needs be decorated, like those of other western potentates, and something must be done to force the growth of secular, and to some extent sacred art, since such Christian temples as the Cathedral of St. Isaac and the Kazan Cathedral, demanded a totally different style of decoration from the little old churches of Moscow, and the northern provinces. So the poor indigenous plant had its roots roughly disturbed by Peter the Great and his successors. Mediocre painters from Germany, Holland and France, were set in Russian soil, and the slow-growing, much-pruned tree of native art was bidden to produce similar blossoms. The results may be seen in the operatic canvases of Brullov, in the "Nazarene" imitations of Brun, and the pietistical insipidities of Neff. Ivanov was one of the first "to make a breach in the citadel of grand art," but having made his one great assault with his picture of "Christ appearing to the Nations," his energies were exhausted. He won only the outposts of artistic freedom, but others followed in his train, and in time stepped into the breach. Five years after the first appearance in Petrograd of Ivanov's masterpiece, Gé exhibited his "Last Supper," and was hailed as the herald of a new school of Russian art.

During that time religious art had followed genre painting along the way opened up by the literary movement. The reaction from tradition seems all the more violent in the case of sacred art, because of the closeness of the bonds that had formerly held it in check. In Gé's "Last Supper" ecclesiastical conventions are thrown to the winds, and the tentative realism of Ivanov is completely outstripped. In seeking to make his picture as naturalistic and picturesque as possible, the artist has not avoided a touch of the theatrical. The attitudes of the chief figures which were meant to be as unstudied and simple as those of ordinary mortals are, on the contrary, decidedly histrionic. The scene represents that dramatic moment when Judas, conscience-stricken, has risen from the table and is leaving the chamber. He is in the act of casting a long scarf over his head. His figure is in darkness, but is silhouetted by the light concentrated in the room behind him. The Saviour, lying oriental fashion on a divan, leans His head wearily on His hand in an attitude of profound human sorrow and disillusionment. At the foot of the divan stands St John, a tall youthful figure. St. Peter has also risen from the table, and is watching the melodramatic exit of Judas.

In the same year that Gé produced this picture Renan's "La Vie de Jesus" made its appearance. It was natural that the painting should be regarded as an outcome of this coincidence; in fact some critics assert that it was a mere illustration to the

book. Stasov in his biography of Gé refutes this assertion, and points out that the painting was well on the road to completion before Renan's work could have reached the artist's hands. As a matter of fact his models for the Saviour and the disciples were chosen among his personal friends. The features of St. John were taken from his own wife, which accounts in some measure for the very feminine type of face; those of the Saviour were partly borrowed from Levitsky's portrait of Herzen, while the St. Peter is a likeness of the painter himself. Gé added the following information as to the genesis of this picture: "Before I went to Florence I was an atheist, and therefore I could create nothing, because an artist without ideals cannot exist. But in Florence a change came over me. I began to read the Bible, to collect documents in support of historical criticism, and to make investigations. But the Scriptures are not merely history to me. When I read the chapters describing the institution of the Holy Sacrament, the whole scene passed before my eyes like a drama. Peter and Judas became living personalities—chiefly by means of the Gospel; I visualized the scene when Judas left the Last Supper, and brought about a complete rupture between himself and Christ. Judas was a real disciple of Christ, he was the only Jew among them, all the others were Galileans. But he could not understand the Christ, because materialists seldom understand idealists." Could anything differ more widely from the unquestioning faith with

which the iconographer set about his task than this modern tendency to exegesis and analysis? The success of the picture in Orthodox Russia seems at first sight paradoxical, but it was an epoch of restless enquiry, and of a general removal of old landmarks. Renan in France, Tolstoi in Russia, Huxley in England, were in their different ways disturbing the tenor of religious thought. "Gé," says Novitsky, "was proud that his philosophical views coincided with the intellectual thought of his day." In his next work, "The Morning of the Resurrection," he carried his naturalism and the use of "local colour" a step further, and here the influence of Renan is undeniable. The unconventionality of his treatment provoked a protest from the clergy, who complained that it was not in keeping with the Gospel narrative. Controversy raged about it for half a year before it was finally exhibited to the public, and in the end it failed to attract people as "The Last Supper" had done. Nor did his "Christ in the Garden of Gethsemane," awaken any profound interest. The idealism which had leavened his first religious picture, seemed to have died out completely in this weak and and tasteless production. About this time the influence of Renan gave place to an immense veneration for Tolstoi, whose work, as he suddenly discovered, "revealed the whole teaching of Christ." It was with the idea of carrying out Tolstoi's dictum, "say something new, important and necessary to mankind," that the pictures "Christ

and His Disciples going out into the Garden of Gethsemane" and "Christ before Pilate" ("What is Truth?") were painted in 1888 and 1890. The first represents a little procession of ghostly figures, with scarves drawn closely around their heads, moving down some terrace steps from the broad moonlight into the darkness of the garden. On the terrace is the Saviour, Who has paused for a moment to gaze up into the shining heavens. The moonlight falls upon His face and reveals that the hour of His agony has already begun. The picture has all the same faults, and some of the merits, of "The Last Supper:" the same melodramatic tendencies, the same too obvious parade of sincerity, and preoccupation with the historic and physical rather than the mystic Christ, and the same power of effective theatrical lighting. Its reception was indifferent. Nothing daunted, however, the artist continued to interpret the Scriptures according to Nicholas Gé, and in "What is Truth?" he painted a typically sensual, gluttonous Roman of the time of Lucullus, questioning the Saviour with a careless smile, as he passes out of the judgment hall, scarcely waiting for an answer which does not really interest him. Why bandy words with the red-eyed, bitter, yet abject man, worn out by a night of mental suffering, who confronts him? This naturalistic representation of the Saviour is repellent. Whether the mystic Christ was incarnated in an unlovely physical form or not, there is no positive proof, but it is certain that from the illu-

minating spirit enclosed within that bodily shrine there must have irradiated a grace which could draw men and women and children near to Him; nor would "The Divine Sufferer" have parted with His sublime dignity even during the night in which He was betrayed. Gé's picture must always seem to believers an indignity offered to the ideal personality of the Saviour. It is said that the picture had its admirers in America and on the Continent. A small circle in Russia certainly hailed it as "audacious" at a moment when every blow aimed at authority found its vindicators. No picture offers a stronger justification of the clerical policy of keeping religious painting in the hands of a community, restricted from outraging public taste and sentiment.

"The Sanhedrim" was altogether banned from public exhibition. Only a few individuals were permitted to inspect the painting which was hung in a small room by itself. Stasov was of this number. He said the grouping of the figures was natural and picturesque, especially the procession of the priests of the Temple bearing palm-branches and psalteries. The High Priest, beside himself with anger, was depicted in the act of heaping reproach and invective upon Christ Who stands against the wall.\* The Saviour's face he found quite unsatisfactory both as to type and expression. Apparently Tolstoi felt the same, for he wrote to Gé: "It is

\* "Then the High Priest rent his clothes and saith, What need we any further witnesses?"

borne in upon me that you must repaint your Christ ; give Him a simple, good countenance with a compassionate expression, such as you might see upon the face of a good man if he were to see some kind old acquaintance dead drunk—or something of that kind. It seems to me that if the face of the Christ were simple, good and compassionate it would appeal to all. Do not be vexed at my giving you advice about what you have thought over a thousand times. It is just because I want everyone to understand all that your picture says ‘ what is great in men’s eyes is abominable in the sight of God,’ and much else ” Gé followed Tolstoi’s advice in this and also in his last religious picture “ The Crucifixion,” in which physical corruption is introduced in the name of ‘naturalism’ It was Tolstoi’s wish that the artist should carry out a whole series of works based on Gospel scenes, and embodying the views of Christianity which they held in common. “ The Crucifixion ” alone was completed. “ I am continually regretting that you have abandoned this plan,” Tolstoi wrote to the painter. “ Perhaps it would have been difficult to finish them—to carry them to the necessary degree of perfection—of that I know nothing, but I do know that all you have thought out, felt and observed as an artist and a Christian, you ought to accomplish. This is your plain duty, your service to God ” “ The Crucifixion ” was not finished until 1894, after nearly ten years of constant retouching and research. It was again proscribed at the Academy

Exhibition, but having been offered accommodation in the house of M Strannolioubsky, many people had access to it. When Tolstoi first saw the painting he asked to be left alone with it. After a time Gé returned to the room, when his friend and master embraced him with tears running down his cheeks, and said. "Dear friend, I feel that the scene was just like this. It is the finest thing you have done."

Although Tolstoi's praise temporarily enhanced Gé's prestige with those who counted themselves among the progressive "intelligents," yet his pictures are now practically forgotten, and his influence on the development of religious art in Russia is happily *nil*. This is not entirely on account of Gé's poverty of technique, although it is a curious fact that the dry perfection of craftsmanship, which distinguishes his historical work, is lacking in his Biblical pictures. It is more probable that his failure to keep a hold upon the popular affection springs from the fact that his art has no roots in the spiritual soil of Russia—that it is in fact devoid of every vestige of national feeling.

Kramskoi, like Gé, projected a whole series of pictures from the life of Christ, but only left two. "Christ in the Wilderness (1872), and the unfinished work "Christ before Pilate." While Gé's art expressed his philosophical and historical views of Christianity, without any mystical feeling whatsoever, Kramskoi inclined rather to the psychological side of the question. In imagination he had realized

a certain condition of soul in the historic Christ, and investing this with a supernatural significance, he painted his "Christ in the Wilderness." Unlike Gé or Ivanov, he did not trouble to collect documents or spend years in verifying archæological details before completing a picture. Although he journeyed to Chufut-Kaleh in the Crimea to sketch the arid rocky plain, which makes such a sad, suggestive setting for his figure of the lonely Christ, he was chiefly concerned to express the inward drama of the soul. It is the Man of Sorrows whom we see in Kramskoi's picture, the human Christ during those forty days of preparation in the solitary wilderness. The painter followed in every detail a vision which had pursued him until he put it on canvas. His first work after leaving the Academy was to model a head of Christ in clay, and the thought of the Saviour's personality was much with him. Shortly after finishing his picture he wrote the following account of it to his friend Th. Vassiliev: "It is now five years since He stood so persistently before my eyes. I was forced to paint Him in order to dispel this vision. I have never had the least doubt that there was nothing of this earth about Him—and this you must understand in the right way—nothing earthly except the form. But does not the form bear witness of the august thought? While I was at work upon Him, I thought, prayed, and suffered much. One night I went for a walk and wandered so long and so far afield that I grew frightened, and, behold, I saw a

figure like a statue. In the morning light, weary, outworn, suffering, He sat alone among the rocks—the sad, chilly boulders. His hands were clasped tightly, convulsively; His fingers interlocked, His feet bruised and wounded; His head bent forward. He was lost in deep thought and silent—so silent, that it seemed to me at last, that His lips were glued together. His eyes saw nothing around Him, only from time to time His eyebrows moved, as though obeying some regular muscular movement. He felt nothing—neither the cold, nor the stiffness of His limbs from long sitting. Nothing was stirring; only on the horizon a black cloud moved out of the east, and a few hairs of His head were blown back horizontally by the breeze. He was thinking, thinking. It grew terrible. How often have I wept over that figure! And after this, what next? Was it possible to paint Him? You yourself ask—and ask very justly. Can I paint the Christ? No, my dear friend, I cannot, it is not possible to paint Him. And yet, all the same I *have* painted Him. In a word, I have finished the picture. Perhaps it is a profanation, but I could not have done otherwise. I may say that I painted it with my blood and tears. But apparently they were not quite efficacious, for sometimes it seems that it is like the Figure I saw that night, and then again suddenly it has no resemblance to it.”

In whatever spirit we accept the source of its inspiration, there is no doubt that the picture is



*Lucy's Gallery, Moscow*

CHRIST IN THE WILDERNESS

*Krinsky (1911)*



profoundly touching ; that it has mystical and sincerely emotional qualities that lift it far above the naïve, sentimental rationalism of Gé

Kramskoi's second religious picture, " Hail ! King of the Jews," was never completed, partly because his circumstances compelled him to accept every commission for portraits and to expend his fast waning physical energies on saleable work. Like his " Christ in the Wilderness," the later picture represented one moment of intense human suffering and humiliation in the life of Our Lord—that moment when the soldiers waiting about the doors of the judgment hall, and bored with long inaction, conceived the idea of amusing themselves at the expense of this quiet, gentle man ; pale, save for the blood which trickled down His cheek from the heavy crown upon His head. It was the old idea that had possessed Kramskoi for so many years : the tragedy of the noble nature that willingly renounces all personal happiness and consciously descends into Hades as a supreme act of love. In his first picture he depicts the moment of resolve, the deliberate choice of the Man-God to lay down His life for His friends ; in " Hail ! King of the Jews ! " he shows the same Man-God fulfilling the destiny which He had accepted and foreseen during the long solitary night among the rocks in the desert. In neither case does the artist show us a historical or a mystical personality, but a collective human one. The Christ was chosen as the most perfect personification of Kramskoi's idea.

Vassily D. Polenov (b 1844) was more directly the continuator of Ivanov's tendencies than either of the two painters whose work we have just been considering. His pre-occupation with ethnographical accuracy and all the stagecraft of his art completely outweighs the modicum of religious feeling which he may have set out to express in his pictures. A many-sided industrious and capable artist, he almost rivals Verestschagin in his accumulation of sketches of Palestine, Syria, and Egypt. Armed to the teeth, so to speak, with the specialist's weapons of costume, customs, types, he set to work upon his panoramic picture "Christ and the Sinner." Here he has painted a crowd of Jewish types that bear, no doubt, the same accurate and mechanically lifelike resemblance to his models that the wax figures of Madame Tussaud's Exhibition bear to their originals. It is one of the pictures in the Alexander III. Gallery, to which well-meaning friends always conduct the unsophisticated tourist, and bid him to admire the conscientiousness and truthfulness with which the artist has approached his subject. It is hardly possible to gainsay the eulogies of these admirers of Polenov, to do so would be as futile and as dangerous as to criticize Wagner to unmusical adorers, besides which these acquired virtues are made only too obvious in the picture. But a trifling leaven of inspiration is needed to make this mass of truth and erudition palatable. The interest of the picture is intended to centre in

the dramatic group—the woman taken in her sin who is being dragged along forcibly by her Pharisaical persecutors. On account of the length of the canvas we have to look more than once before we see the unobtrusive figure of the Saviour seated against a wall by the Temple steps. On the left side of the picture sit—or rather squat—in Oriental fashion the group of people whom He was teaching when the incident occurred. Christ is attired unconventionally, and probably correctly, in the eastern dress of to-day, with a staff in His hand ; but the pose of the figure lacks dignity and we feel that if the scribes and Pharisees addressed this wanderer as “ Master ” their intention was probably satirical. Apart from its inward spiritual dryness, the canvas is so large, and the various interests of the scene so scattered, that the eye carries away a confused impression. Polenov’s picture of “ Christ walking by the Sea of Galilee,” is a much less pretentious and more satisfying work, the solitary figure might certainly be that of any stately oriental, meditating by the rocky shore, but the landscape shows a real command of local colour and atmospheric effect.

Another version of “ The Sinner,” by N. I. Semiradsky is an example of this spirit of painstaking research run utterly to seed. His is a kind of genteel and superficial art which carries no impulse within it. Yet it has its own public in every land, England once harboured enthusiasts for the pictures of Edwin Long, therefore, we need not be surprised to find

cheap reproductions of Semiradsky's "Sinner" in so many middle-class homes in Russia. The absolute incongruity of hanging this affected kind of religious art in the same room with an ikon, even of the most inferior description, does not seem to strike the good people who in Kramskoi's words were "simply bowled over" by its effective play of external animation and "assortment of colours," when the picture was first exhibited. But little need be said about this sort of art, which is neither religious nor national.

The subject of the Temptation appealed to that group of artists who painted scenes from the life of Christ without any devout convictions as to His divinity. The Laodiceans of the middle of last century, who had "neither the strength to believe nor the courage to disbelieve," seem to have been able to make a compromise with conscience over this particular incident. They all represent Christ as a perplexed and suffering man, and leave out of consideration the ministration of the angels. Among the many representations of this scene that of Gregory G. Myassoiedov (1855-1911), painted as late as 1897, has attained some popularity. Christ, standing on a narrow rocky path near the summit of a mountain, is gazing with strained, wild eyes over the distant landscape, at that moment of time when He saw all the kingdoms of the world and rejected them for the Kingdom of God within. There is nothing here of the unutterable sadness and discouragement that

give Kramskoi's picture such human poignancy. Myassoiedov shows us merely a conventional Christ, a rather meek and sentimental dreamer. Here the affinity with the highminded, mild and inoffensive art of Ary Scheffer is very noticeable.

Repin's picture of "St. Nicholas Thaumaturge staying the Execution of three Innocent Men," is neither iconography nor emancipated religious art. It belongs to the sphere of church history. In it is concentrated all this artist's vigour and realistic force, resulting in a muscular Christianity devoid of mysticism. Unlike Gé and Polenov, who seek to make up for a lack of spiritual inspiration by a conscientious study of archæological details, Repin treats his subject with austere simplicity, ignoring all that is not necessary to the broad plan of work.\* St. Nicholas laying his hand on the executioner's sword is a stately presence, and the half-nude victim, awaiting decapitation in a devout attitude on his knees, gives the painter an opportunity of painting a superb masculine figure such as he has made so potent and actual in his famous laughing "Cossacks." In drawing, this picture is firm and decisive, and its colour is clear and strong

\* In the Alexander III Gallery, Petrograd

## CHAPTER XII

### SACRED ART (*continued*)

The new ecclesiastical art. Vasnietsov's decorations for St. Vladimir's Cathedral, Kiev. Vroubel. Nesterov.

FINALLY we come to more recent developments of iconography, or church painting pure and simple. In 1862 the foundations of the Cathedral of St. Vladimir were laid in the city of Kiev, for ever associated with the first Christian ruler of Russia. The work was not completed until 1896, but as early as 1883 the decoration of the building was begun under the direction of Professor Prakhov. Victor Vasnietsov was then thirty-five years of age, and had won considerable fame as the painter of scenes from mediæval Russian history and legend. The son of a priest in the Government of Vyatka, he came to Petrograd in 1867, and entered the Academy schools a year later. He attracted the attention of Stassov from the outset of his career by his remarkably clever pencil drawings of Russian monks and street types, and he was soon able to get work as an illustrator of folk and fairy tales. In 1876 he spent a short time in France, and afterwards settled in Moscow in order to paint the friezes for the Historical Museum mentioned in chapter IX. While there, he made the acquaintance of the wealthy

patron of art, S. I. Mamontov, who resided in Moscow during the winter, and spent the summer at his estate in the district of Abramstiev, where he gathered around him a circle of gifted artists. A fine studio was built near the house by the architect Hartman, while Ropets designed and carried out a picturesque bathhouse—both were in the old Russian style. Here Repin, Antokolsky and other famous artists came as guests and remained to work through the summer if they pleased. Two of the visitors, Vasnietsov and Polenov, were very much interested in architecture, which was also the chief occupation of Andrei Mamontov, the son of the house. The young artists resolved to erect a small church in the grounds of the property, modelled upon the very characteristic Novgorodian edifice of The Saviour, at Nereditsa. Vasnietsov's share in the decorations consisted of pictures of St Sergius of Radonezh and the Virgin Mother, besides most of the floral and other designs, over which he spent a great deal of time, studying Russian ornamentation and illumination in all its periods. Not long afterwards Andrei Mamontov died and his father built a second church to his memory, entrusting the designing of it entirely to Vasnietsov. Consequently, when, in 1885, the artist was invited to undertake the mural decorations of the Cathedral of St Vladimir, he had already

\* Mamontov was equally generous as a patron of music. He it was who started the Private Opera at Moscow and gave Shaliapin his first opportunity to become famous.

had considerable experience in such work. He was, indeed, ideally fitted for the task; imaginative, well-versed in the old traditional iconography, devoutly orthodox, he could undertake it sincerely in the spirit of the old church painters, as "a maker of pictures, a worker for God." But before actually beginning to sketch out his plans, he made a short tour to Italy, to study and take notes of some of the most famous monuments of Christian art, in Rome, Venice and Ravenna, especially those in which the Byzantine influence prevails. He also spent some time in making himself familiar with the frescoes and mosaics in St. Sophia at Kiev, and the Monastery of St. Cyril. Thus equipped, he entered upon the work which was to occupy the next ten years of his life. The task was colossal. Stassov in his monograph on Vasnetsov, says that with the assistance of a few pupils, he covered 4,000 square arshins (half an acre) of wall, painted fifteen pictures and thirty separate full-length figures, without counting the medallions let into various other decorative backgrounds.

Here, as in his historical pictures, the dominant note of Vasnetsov's art is his intense and inviolate nationality. These Orthodox Saints and potentates—Olga and Vladimir, Boris and Gleb, Andrew Bogolioubsky, Alexander Nevsky, Eudocia and Euphrosyne, Nikita, Bishop of Novgorod, Nestor the Chronicler, and the Iconographer Olympia of Pechersk—are Russians from crown to sole. In town and country

we may meet the same faces in the Russia of to-day, as those that confront us in Vasnetsov's paintings of St. Alexander Nevsky, Michael Tversky, or the dignified bearded Fathers of the Church.

Stasov considered that of all these single figures of saints—which are treated according to traditional iconography at full length and in full face—Vasnetsov has been most successful in his representations of SS. Olga and Catherine. “No one before his time,” he used to say, “either among the old or the modern painters, had attempted to reveal the true character of the great Princess Olga; the combination of power and energy, of ferocity and red-hot fury which still lingered from her pagan upbringing, with the meekness and fervour that followed her conversion to Christianity.” Most people studying Vasnetsov's St. Olga will feel that he has done more justice to the imperious, revengeful Queen, than to the elderly Saint.\* Of St. Catherine, Stasov said “I never saw a nobler or more expressive picture of a human soul quietly and gradually awakening from the sleep of death to the realisation of a serene, fervent and resplendent existence.” In Vasnetsov's saints, there is, of course, far more attempt at characterisation than in those of the old iconographers. He is guided by

\* Olga, widow of the hero Igor, and grandmother of Vladimir the Glorious Sun, ruled wisely over a large district of Russia during the minority of her son Svyetoslav. The chronicles say that she avenged the slaughter of her husband by the Drevlyans by inviting their chiefs to a banquet and suffocating them in a steam bath. She was baptized at Constantinople in 955 A.D., and her old fierce energy then expended itself in zeal for the new faith.

imagination, where they simply worked from traditional models. The result, beautiful as it often appears to our eyes, does not invariably please the Russian people, brought up upon the conventions of the older art. A friend once told me that while in the Cathedral of St Vladimir at Kiev, he had said to some peasants who were gazing around "Are you not proud of your splendid church and the wonderful pictures in it?" "Yes," answered one of the men, "they are, no doubt, wonderful and beautiful, but we like the old Ikons best" "How is that?" asked my friend. "These have too much life in them," was the reply. A shrewd piece of criticism and psychologically interesting as throwing some light upon the attitude of the *monk* to his "prayer pictures." The paintings are not precious to him on account of their intrinsic beauty, but because of the atmosphere created by generations of worshippers who have stood and knelt before them, so that they have stored up through the centuries a pure magnetic potency that irradiates from them, a power that calms and uplifts. In a word, it is the faithful who have sanctified the art of iconography, not the art which has sanctified them.

Vasnetsov's decorative work may be divided into two categories; the historic frescoes and ikons, such as "The Baptism of Vladimir" and "The Baptism of the Russian Folk"; and the national saints, Olga, Michael Tversky, Boris and Gleb, the Fathers of the Church Universal, and the Fathers of the Russian

Church,\* in which he has overcome with extraordinary tact and skill, the difficulties imposed by ecclesiastical convention, as regards the immobility and monotony of pose. Here we find the best traditions of the Stroganov school united to the vitality of a living modern art. For all that concerns the costumes and accessories, Vasnetsov has studied and reproduced in his pictures, everything that is most authentic in the libraries and vestiaries of Moscow, Kiev and other ecclesiastical treasuries.

To the second category belong the purely mystical pictures, the works that could only have been satisfactorily carried out by an artist, who had preserved his faith intact, who loved his Church as passionately as his country; to whom the mythical, the historical, and the mystical Christ are indivisible aspects of One and the Same Person. These paintings include The Nine Beatitudes, forming part of the great frieze of the cupola, a series of pictures which seems to be inspired by a vision, so completely of the other world is the impression they make on those who know them well. Here is St Mary of Egypt, clothed in her long white hair which has been her only raiment during her sojourn of forty-seven years in the wilderness;

\* The Church Universal is represented by St Basil the Great, St Gregory the Theologian and St John Chrysostom (Greek), St Athanasius (Alexandria), Pope Clement (Rome), St Nicholas of Lycia (Asia). The Russian Fathers are St Anthony the Hermit (founder of the Pechersk Monastery), St, Sergius of Radonezh, the Monk Theodosius, St Alexis (Metropolitan of all Russia), St Stephen of Perm and St Peter (Metropolitan of Moscow). Behind them are three great churches representing Moscow (St, Michael), Kiev and Novgorod.

here is the St. Catherine, already mentioned, and the touching picture of St. Sophia, with her three martyred daughters, Faith, Hope, and Charity, being led into Paradise by an angel; and here too that strange occult representation of Ananias, Azarias and Misael, attired as Assyrians, praising the Lord as they pass out of the fiery furnace. Then there are the six panels on copper painted for the Iconostasis, with the enthroned Christ in the centre, a gentle, lovable Saviour without a touch of the sentimentality with which a Gé or a Myassoiedov would invest Him. Also the remarkably original representations of The Last Judgment, and of God the Father, and, most wonderful of all, a Crucifixion in which angels are ministering to the dying Saviour. Only the upper part of the cross is clearly shown, the body of Christ being veiled by cloudy wings, as though the gathering mists on Calvary already shrouded Him from the sight of those who mourned at the foot of the cross. Other angels hover over the arms of the cross, and the face of the Saviour wears an expression of perfect peace and contentment. In all religious art I think there is no more spiritual conception of the Crucifixion, and certainly no other picture in the world which could reconcile the believer so tenderly with the idea of death.

While speaking of the imaginative power of Vassietsov we immediately recall his unique treatment of angels and archangels, seraphim and cherubim and all "the heavenly host." His Seraph with folded



THE CRUCIFIED CHRIST - CONSOLIDATED ANGLES



wings between which we have a glimpse of clasped hands and an earnest prayerful face, is of unearthly beauty, and the colouring is in keeping with the form; wonderful tints of blue are combined and fused, as though the azure of the heavens shone through the diaphanous substance of this celestial visitant. The eyes of all Vasniétsov's saints and angels have—in varying degrees—the same almost fixed look of awe and rapture. This is in accordance with the traditions of certain schools of iconography, and it is—so I have been told—a pronounced characteristic of the figures represented in the mural decorations of the old Cathedral of St. Sophia, at Kiev.

It would be possible to devote pages to Vasniétsov's labours in the Cathedral of St. Vladimir, for the mass of decorative designs with which he has covered every arch, pillar and panel is so original in form and so richly varied in colour that it would repay the closest analysis. Almost all the sketches made by Vasniétsov for the Cathedral are preserved in the Tretyakov Gallery at Moscow. Many of these are in water-colours which he handles boldly with very rich and splendid colour effects. It is therefore possible to make a fairly satisfactory study of his works without going to Kiev, although naturally something is missed by not seeing them on the walls. But great as is Vasniétsov's significance in Russian art, which owes to him no less than the true renaissance of iconography, I must not be tempted to give an undue space in this book to his work. I cannot leave this

subject, however, without some account of the boldest and most distinctly national of all his pictures—the Virgin over the altar in the central apse.\*

Here we have the Slavonic Madonna realised for the first time in art. Hitherto the ikons representing the Mother of God were reproductions of Greek and Byzantine models without much trace of subjective feeling. While faithfully observing the traditions of the past, Vasnetsov has given quite a new ideal to the religious painters of the future. The hooded figure of the Virgin stands upon a field of ice against the cold Northern sky, whereon a few stars scintillate as on a frosty night; over her head there is a concentration of light like the Aurora Borealis; on either side of the Virgin is a flight of cherubs of strange, occult beauty. The resolute energy of the Mother's bearing, and the intense vitality of the babe Jesus, Who seems eager to leap from her arms into the world of action, are in strong contrast to the placid and contemplative ideals of the Christ and His Mother which meet us everywhere in mid-Europe and Italy. "I as an Orthodox and devout believer," the painter once said to Vladimir Stassov, "can only light a little candle to the glory of God. Perhaps it is not even of the finest wax, but it is offered from my inmost heart." Undoubtedly, it is a true son of the Russian Church who has here "lit

\* The picture already has its legend. It is said that while the artist was thinking out his design for the altarpiece he came to the Cathedral one day to find a curious stain upon the undecorated wall, the form of which suggested his existing work.

a candle to his God"; who in this inspired painting has bestowed upon his fellow worshippers one more object "potent unto bodily salvation, and succour, and aid, for all who desire to make use of it Amen" \*

Vasnetsov gave a new impulse to religious art in Russia, although he remained singular in the ease with which he accomplished great and moving things within the limits imposed by ecclesiastical authority. Though in the decorations of St. Vladimir certain concessions were now made to the artists, yet the directions given to them were often calculated to restrict the imagination of a painter of a moderately original mind. Brounikov, for example, when engaged on work for the Cathedral of the Saviour, in Moscow, was bidden to confine himself to the study of the pre-Raphaelites, Giotto and Fra Angelico, and for the representations of angels to imitate those of Benozzo-Gozzoli in the Palazzo Riccardi, Florence. It is not surprising that the ecclesiastical authorities did not wish to have churches decorated in the style of G6, but neither can we feel any wonder that realists, such as Pivarnikov, could not do their best work under such conditions, and preferred to relinquish their commissions.

Michael Alexandrovich Vroubel (1856-1905) was

\* This quotation is from the prayer generally recited by the priest for the blessing of any special object for constant use. It will be found in Miss Isabel Hapgood's valuable translation of the Service Book of the Holy Orthodox Church (Houghton, Mifflin & Co., Boston, New York).

invited to Kiev in 1883 by Professor Prakhov to assist in the decorative work of the Cathedral of St Vladimir. The romantic atmosphere of the old city enthralled this wayward and highly-gifted artist for a time. In the Cathedral of St. Sophia and the churches of St. Michael and St Cyril, he quickly assimilated the Russo-Byzantine style, and coming to it direct from the routine of the Academy schools he found in it a refreshing source of inspiration. His work in this sphere is much freer than that of Vasnietsov, although it lacks the fervour of a profound if somewhat restricted religious conviction. Vroubel was first employed upon the restoration of the Church of St. Cyril, for which he executed a series of frescoes as remarkable for originality of conception as for purity and charm of colouring—for the artist had a true colour sense, and shows it perhaps above all in the sketches and works in which he takes water-colour for his medium. The most striking of his mural decorations for St. Cyril's is the "Procession of the Holy Ghost," in the roof of the choir, in which the faces of the Apostles reflect, each one, a sense of joy and satisfaction, the sudden realization that his own special gift has been perfected from above. A very Russian "Virgin and Child"; a head of the Prophet Moses, a beardless young man of the inspired Jewish type; and two rather tempestuous angels with candles and censers, borne, as it were, on the wings of the wind, are full of power and mystery, and herald the coming of those strange, vehement, fantastic dream-

pictures by which he was soon to make himself one of the most loudly-discussed figures in the world of Russian art. Meanwhile, the painting which added most to his reputation at this time is probably the "Lament at the Sepulchre" (1887), a *Pietà* for the Cathedral of St. Vladimir, which shows the influence of a visit to Venice paid in 1884, when he undoubtedly assimilated the characteristics of Bellini, Mantegna, and other primitives, with the same eagerness, with which he had entered into the spirit of the anonymous Russo-Byzantine art, a few months previously. But in spite of the expressive beauty of these finished sketches they were not considered suitable for the Cathedral, although some of the artist's purely decorative designs appear there in proximity with those of Vasnetsov, Mamantov and Prakhov, and, for richness of invention, both as regards form and colour, they are considered superior to the work of the two latter, and equal to the ornamental motives of the first-named artist. But although some injustice was done to Vrubel, and perhaps also to national art, by the rejection of these religious paintings, the original sketches of which have happily been preserved in the Art Museum at Kiev, it is doubtful whether the artist's temperament fitted him for the exclusive apprenticeship of years to one colossal task such as Vasnetsov had the fervour and skill to carry through to the end. His active mind was already attracted to many other sides of art, and, in 1889, he was induced by Serov to leave Kiev

and settle permanently in Moscow where he became absorbed in quite new and different preferences.

Michael Vassilievich Nesterov (b. 1862), shows himself to some extent a disciple of Vasnetsov, although there is much less of apocalyptic strangeness and hieratical obscurity in his art. His pictures bespeak an atmosphere of consecrated quietude and a tenderness and reserve that separate them from all the rest of the religious art of Russia. Without being ecclesiastical they are cloistral in their fastidious purity and naïveté. In "The Hermit" (1889) he paints with intimate knowledge a type of poor and pious old Russian; bent and tottering, dressed in a shabby old cape, with birch-bark *lapti* on his feet. The chief interest in Nesterov's "On the Hills" centres in a beautiful and grave type of Russian womanhood. She stands at the top of a grassy slope, a bunch of wild flowers in her hand—those deep-hued field-blossoms of the northern summer that surely owe the intensity of their colour to the sunlight which bathes them by night as well as by day. Beyond her lies a wide plain, intersected by a shining river, and in the far distance another range of low hills. Nesterov is the modern iconographer of the life of St. Sergius. Beginning in 1890 with "The Vision of the Boy Bartholomew" (afterwards called St. Sergius), he went on to paint "The Youth of St. Sergius," in which he represents a gentle, ecstatic adolescent, standing as though rapt, seeing some vision or hearing some heavenly message, in the midst of the forest.

Stretched at his feet is the tame bear that is to St. Sergius what his lion is to St. Jerome, and in the background a timber church is seen among the trees. In a tryptich called "The Labours of St. Sergius," the central panel represents the Saint sawing timber to build the Monastery of the Holy Trinity at Sergievo; right and left he is seen carrying water and walking through the snow, probably going to visit the sick. Finally, there is a picture of the Saint in the prime of manhood standing in a sparsely-wooded landscape. But none of these pictures equals the simple enchanting grace of the "Vision of St. Dmitri, Tsarevich." This is the little prince, the son of Ivan the Terrible's old age, who was supposed to have been cruelly murdered at Ouglich by the order of Boris Godounov, because he stood in the way of the Protector's ambitious design to possess the throne of Russia. Boris and his party declared that the boy had inherited all the wickedness of his father, and that he had wounded himself in an epileptic attack. Public sympathy, however, invested the Tsarevich with a sweet and pious nature. His body was afterwards removed from Ouglich and interred in the Cathedral of St. Michael, in the Kremlin. He was eventually canonized, his shrine being still much frequented by Orthodox believers. Nesterov has painted him as a gentle, devout spirit. His boyish head is bent a little to one side as though by the pressure of his crown, his slight body seems overweighted by his fur-lined royal mantle; his eyes are



and its realism. In some artists these two attributes are found united, as in Vasnetsov who, having painted such touching pieces of actuality as "Changing Quarters," could pass on to "The Crucified Saviour Consoled by Angels," and find power at will to stir our human or our spiritual emotions. In other painters the two visions—the concrete and the ideal—seem to remain for ever sundered. Such is the case with the vehement realist Repin and the contemplative idealist Nesterov. Contrasting the two, we are reminded of the *sobriquets* once affixed by the French critics to Courbet and Puvis de Chavannes; for if Repin is *le fou furieux*, Nesterov is *le fou tranquille*, of Russian art. The secret of the quiet mind has been vouchsafed to the latter; he has much of Dostoievsky's sweetness, but prefers to keep out of his fragrant art the evil odour of sin. He is not one of the Russian artists whose altruism takes him down into Hades, like Repin or Verestschagin; his pictures reflect the cloistral purity of a Fra Angelico and seem to be the artistic interpretation of St. Paul's precept. "whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good repute—think on these things."

## CHAPTER XIII

### SCULPTURE

Carving. Sculptors of the XVIII. century Lack of national feeling. Antokolsky. Ginsburg. Prince Trubetskoi. Vroubel. Mme Goloubkina Koustodiev

**A**LTHOUGH "wooden Russia" shows much in the way of decorative carving, from the primitive *Koumury*, or idols, and the rude semblance of horses' heads into which the ends of the roof-beams of the peasants' cottages are still frequently fashioned, to the finished work displayed in some of the timber churches, yet carving in the round—sculptural carving—so characteristic of German art in the period of Syrlin and Stoss—made little progress in Russia, principally because the iconoclastic movement which permanently affected the Eastern Faith, put an end to the use of "graven images" in the churches, although they occasionally found their way back and remained unobserved in the remoter districts. Statues were forbidden by the Patriarch Philaret early in the XVII. century, with the single exception of those representing St. Nicholas, because, tradition says, whenever the statue of this patron saint was removed from its pedestal, it miraculously reappeared.

This measure may have been considered necessary, because, at this time, wooden statues clumsily proportioned, often exceeding life-size, and painted in natural colours, were made in Russia, which perhaps recalled too forcibly the *Koumury* of the past. They, too, were forbidden by an order issued in 1722 and wood-carving became once more a purely decorative art. The French artist Michel founded a school of wood-carving during the reign of Peter the Great; but the Russians themselves had already produced a good deal of characteristic work before the condemnation of sculptured ikons came into force. It was not, however, as sculptors of statues that they excelled, they carved a great number of crosses, some to be worn on the person, others to be placed upon altars, or to mark the spot where a church was to be built, some for memorial crosses, and for a variety of other purposes. The surface of these was carved with a scene from Holy Scripture, or representations symbolical of the great festivals, and the workmanship was often very delicate. Candlesticks, chalices and other church utensils were also made of carved wood. Deep carving was not so much practised as panel-work, which was applied to the article to be decorated. In addition, the carving was picked out with colour and gilding. The Royal throne in St. Sophia at Novgorod is a beautiful specimen of this work, dating from the XV century. Wood carving kept very free from Western influence.

Quite different was the development of metal work, forged and cast, which may be referred to in this connection. This craft was strongly affected by the influence of Germany, and some early examples were undoubtedly imported thence, such as the so-called bronze Doors of Korsoun, in St. Sophia at Novgorod, which were probably made at Magdeburg in the XII century and show in proof of their western origin a Latin inscription, and a decidedly Catholic tendency in the choice and treatment of the subjects which adorn their twenty-six panels. An authentic example of native work exists in the Vassilievsky doors in the Convent of the Assumption, at Alexandrov, which take their name from their maker, Vassily, Archbishop of Novgorod in 1336. But the work is more iconographic than sculptural. The double doors are of wood to which are applied plaques of bronze filled in with a gilded design on a cinnamon-coloured ground. There are twenty-six panels, and the centre stile is treated in the same way and decorated with figures of Saints. It is a very early example of Novgorodian iconography.

Up to the time of the foundation of the Academy of Arts scarcely any sculptor of even mediocre talent had appeared in Russia.

At Archangel carving in ivory and bone was carried to such a degree of perfection that during the reigns of Elisabeth and Catherine the Great this industry rose to the level of an art. Gradually, however, the work lost its individual character, and deteriorated

into the mere imitation of the rococo, Louis-Seize style.

In 1766, Etienne Falconet was recommended to Catherine II by Diderot, as an artist of talent, and to him she confided the task of designing a monument to her predecessor Peter the Great. The statue which now stands opposite the Isaac Cathedral, is one of the most striking monuments in Petrograd, partly by reason of its own merits—for it has vigour, and is said to be a good likeness of the Emperor—and partly because the idea of dispensing with the conventional pedestal and mounting the statue on a huge natural boulder of granite adds greatly to the powerful impression it makes upon us. Peter is forcing his rearing horse to the edge of a precipice, trampling underfoot a huge python, symbolical of difficulties and hostilities, and pointing with a proud gesture to the Neva and the city of his creation.

Fedot Ivanovich Shoubin (1740-1805), a pupil of the Academy, showed sufficient vitality to resist the wholly foreign influences which prevailed there, and to oppose a little naturalism to the artificial style then in vogue. He executed a series of busts of famous contemporaries of Catherine the Great, which adorn the Oranienbaum Palace, and a full-length statue of the Empress herself. T. N. Stchedrin (1751-1825) who was preferred by his contemporaries to Shoubin, carved the bas-reliefs in the Kazan Cathedral at Petrograd. Andrei Kozlovsky (1733-1802), a sculptor of some talent, but quite French in style,

is best known by his monument to Suvorov in Petrograd, representing that famous soldier as a corpulent and theatrical Roman warrior, according to the pseudo-classic fashion of the day.

No distinct signs of an original or national style are to be discerned in this branch of art during the first half of the 19th century. Among the sculptors of the reigns of Alexander I. and Nicholas I., Stavasseur (1816-1850), and Vitali (1794-1855) were quite cosmopolitan in their respective styles; the former produced a long series of pleasing allegorical and mythological statues; while the latter, in the words of Stassov, "paid brazen compliments" to the Imperial family, whose portraits he reproduced in his bronze bas-relief of the Meeting of the Emperor Theodosius and St. Isaac of Dalmatia in the Cathedral, dedicated to that saint in Petrograd. Count Feodor Tolstoi (1783-1873) who came of an aristocratic family, began life as a naval officer, and afterwards found it difficult to combine the vocation of a courtier with that of an artist. A passionate admirer of Greek art, he imitated the antique not merely for fashion's sake but because he loved it. His work, though graceful, is amateurish, and his so called masterpiece—his illustrations of Bogdanovich's poem *Psyche* are merely close imitations of Flaxman. His treatment, in the same form, of episodes from the Franco-Russian war of 1812, in which classical types figure in Russian helmets and cuirasses is quite unconvincing from the national point of view.

Pimenov, (1812-1864), whose "Russian Boy, Playing at Huckle-bones" excited universal enthusiasm in 1836, and caused the poet Poushkin to exclaim: "Thank God, at last a Russian sculptor shows us the people!" unhappily followed it up by a series of tame, academic works, quite Italian in sentiment, such as the colossal bronzes of the Transfiguration and The Resurrection in the Isaac Cathedral. Greatly admired in his day, his influence in sculpture is now as completely forgotten as that of Brullov in painting.

Baron Klodt (1805-1867) broke to some extent with academic conventions in his monument to the Russian fabulist Krylov \* (1855), which decorates the Children's Playground in the Summer Garden at Petrograd. Klodt was particularly successful in modelling animals, and although there is something refreshingly natural in the pose of the principal figure itself, yet, undoubtedly, the best features of his monument to Krylov are the bronze bas-reliefs let into the four sides of the granite pedestal, representing scenes from the fables in which birds and four-footed creatures play the leading parts. In this work, and in his equestrian statue of Koutouzov, he ventured to discard the Roman toga and classical draperies of the past in favour of more modern and realistic clothing. His "Four Wild Horses and their Tamers," which adorn the Anichkov Bridge at Petrograd, though very unequal in merit, and open to criticism from the anatomical point of view—the animals'

\* The Russian La Fontaine (1768-1844)

forelegs in two instances being stiff and unnatural—make an impression of vigorous movement.\* Klodt was certainly the first Russian sculptor who made a continuous effort to shake off the fetters of pseudo-classical tradition.

After an interval of some years, during which sculpture fell to its lowest ebb in Russia, an important monument was erected at Novgorod the Great, in 1862, to commemorate the 1000th anniversary of the founding of the Russian Empire. The work, which was entrusted to Mikieshin (1836-1896), consists of an allegorical figure of Russia kneeling before her guardian angel, who is leaning on a cross. The pedestal is carved with bas-reliefs representing Russian celebrities; grouped around are bronze figures each of which typifies a special period in the history of the country. Rurik, Dimitri Donskoi, Ivan III., Peter the Great, Michael Feodorovich, and St Vladimir. Although Mikieshin was hailed by his contemporaries as a nationalist in art, there is not much racial feeling in the work. The subject is national, but the treatment still remains conventional. This monument closes the first period in modern Russian sculpture, which lasted about a century and produced nothing of striking originality, or genuine national quality.

- Soon after the accession of Alexander II (1855) the new and vitalizing spirit which pervaded all society

\* They owe not a little to Coustou's famous *Chevaux de Marly* in the Champs-Élysées, Paris.

made itself felt in painting, music and literature.\* Sculpture was slower to be affected by the liberal ideals but it could not stand altogether outside the progressive movement. A decisive step was taken in the direction of freedom from traditional restraint by Kamensky, (b. 1838), a young pupil of Pimenov, who left the Academy in 1860. His "Boy-Sculptor" is a graceful figure, treated with courageous unconventionality, and free from the hallmark of any particular school or period. The face of the lad who is absorbed in his endeavour to model a bird, is quite an ordinary Russian folk-type, and full of natural expression. This work was followed by a series of similar subjects from everyday life, the two most successful being the groups "The First Steps" (1867), and "A Widow and Child" (1868). Another sculptor who did some fresh and pleasing work in the style of Kamensky, was his fellow-pupil, Roumyantsiev, whose "Boy with a Fishing Rod" is a popular favourite in the Alexander III Museum, Petrograd.

While these two artists were feeling their way to new and more realistic methods of treatment, the majority of sculptors of the day were content to trudge along in the pedestrian path of pseudo-classicism. About 1860, however, a student entered the Academy of Arts in Petrograd, who was destined to mark a point of great importance to this art, not only to Russia, but to the countries of Western Europe

\* The Emancipation of the Serfs took place in 1861

This was Mark Matveich Antokolsky. Born in 1843, in the Government of Vilna, of Jewish parents in poor circumstances, his early life as a student in Petrograd is a record of painful struggles against extreme poverty and misunderstanding. In spite of his undeniable gifts, the youth was not a favourite with the professors, who utterly failed to grasp the racial and temperamental reasons for his anti-Greek tendencies, or to realize that Antokolsky's innate mysticism could not harmonize with the Greek ideals expressed in sensuous physical beauty. Antokolsky's first work, for which he was awarded a silver medal, must have presented a curiously isolated appearance among the nymphs, fauns, and Venuses of his fellow-students; for it was a realistic portrait of an old Jewish tailor threading his needle, and was carved in wood—the only material he could afford. Finding the atmosphere of Petrograd hopelessly uncongenial, the young man betook himself to Berlin, which could hardly have been a change for the better for this Jewish disciple of mediævalism. But there he succeeded at least in getting some journeyman's work, which enabled him to live. After spending nearly five years in Germany, he returned to Russia full of a project, long-brooded in his mind, to execute a statue of Ivan the Terrible. Stassov thought Antokolsky first conceived the idea after seeing a performance of Count Alexis Tolstoi's play dealing with the same subject. Russian art and literature can show many representations of this sinister historic

character, but none so powerful as that of Antokolsky. "Ivan the torturer and the tortured," as the sculptor calls him, is made living to us in this arresting creation. The Tsar is seated in state, his spare figure wrapped in a rich robe, his steel-tipped staff—once reddened with the blood of his first born—leans close to his hand. On his knee lies an open missal. His head droops on his breast. He is lost in remorseful thought; harrowed by hideous memories, shaken by the terrors of judgment. We realize that this is only a lull between two accesses of fury. The very words of Holy Scripture which give him no comfort now, may, if he chance to light upon some text fanatically misapprehended, send him forth, fell and revengeful, like one of those half-human locusts in the Apocalypse, "whose power was to hurt men." But for the moment we can see that conscience is working sharply and that the tyrant's suffering is acute.

The statue was exhibited at the South Kensington Museum in 1872. It has been suggested by Antokolsky's critics, that he borrowed the pose of this figure from Houdon's famous statue of Voltaire. The points of resemblance between the two works are not actually very close, moreover, we have Stassov's word that the Russian artist had never seen the statue of Voltaire until he, himself, showed him a *replica* long after the statue of The Terrible had been exhibited in public for the first time.

Soon afterwards, Antokolsky produced two essays in realism: "The Descent of the Inquisition upon

a Jewish Family," which is an attempt to depict an whole dramatic scene in sculpture ; and " Two Jews disputing over the Talmud " The critics were very severe upon these two works, and Antokolsky himself seems to have regarded them as experiments in combined high and low relief In 1874, his statue of " Christ bound before Pilate " was completed The sculptor has represented Christ with much boldness and power in His glance, which seems to be directed over the head of Pilate, and fixed upon a higher Judgment Seat. He has also given Our Lord a completely Jewish type of face, a proceeding which, as Antokolsky himself observed, " pleased neither Jews nor Christians " This statue was exhibited at the Paris Exhibition in 1878, when the international jury awarded it a gold medal.

He was now beginning to make a great name outside Russia In 1882, the Paris correspondent of the *Times*, wrote that it was to be hoped that French sculptors would learn of Antokolsky and acknowledge his striking inspiration, which proceeded from the sincere study of real life.

Antokolsky himself valued his statue of " Spinoza " above all his works " My whole soul is expressed in it," he said. " In hours of suffering and depression I never find such calm of spirit, as when I stand before this statue." The sitting figure, fragile and invalidish ; the worn hands crossed over the shabby dressing-gown, and holding up a wadded covering over the knees ; the thoughtful, sensitive face framed

in long ringlets like a woman's ; the expressive eyes and gentle mouth, the lips parted in an almost imperceptible smile—all make up a touching portrait which recalls Sully Prudhomme's sonnet on Baruch Spinoza :

" C'était un homme doux, de chétive santé,  
Qui tout en polissant des verres de lunettes,  
Mit l'essence divin en formules très-nettes,  
Si nettes que le monde en fut épouvanté "

The antithesis of this contemplative figure is to be found in Antokolsky's vigorous conception of " Peter the Great " Upright, peremptory, booted and spurred, a cane in his right hand, and dressed in the uniform of the famous Preobrajensky regiment, the beardless Tsar, with his flowing *perruque à la Louis-Quatorze*, has little externally in common with the Tsars of earlier days The hero of Poltava stands facing a fresh breeze, to which every line of his body seems to be offering energetic resistance The work is nobly inspired and is worthy to be set side by side with the more subtle " Ivan the Terrible " Not quite equal to these two works, but still finely realised, are the equestrian statues of Jaroslav and Ivan III. The former shows Russia's first Lawgiver in his old age. Lost in thought, absent-mindedly pulling at his long Russian beard, he is dressed in the old national costume, that we see depicted in some of the earliest examples of Novgorodian art. The horse has grown old in the service of his master, and has no pretensions to conventional beauty ; the rich drapery thrown

over him, hardly avails to conceal his defects—the large head and poor hind-quarters, typical of the average Russian horse. On the other hand, Antokolsky depicts Ivan III., the uniter of the appanages, and consolidator of the future empire, in accordance with his period, as a less elementary being. He, too, is reflecting profoundly, but there is physical and mental force in the figure bestriding a mettlesome steed, and a reflection of character in the imperturbable ease with which the slow-thinking, patient and determined statesman is restraining the restless animal as it paws the ground. Stassov comments on a certain general resemblance between this statue and Henri Regnault's great picture of " Marshal Prim " in the Musée du Louvre ; an accidental likeness since, as he says, Antokolsky knew nothing of the picture until they saw it together at the Vienna Exhibition of 1873.

Two other striking resuscitations of figures from Russia's past, which it seems inevitable to contrast with each other, are the man of peace—Nestor the Chronicler, and the fighting adventurer Yermak, who conquered Siberia in the XVI. century. The old monk, hooded and bearded, recalls in some particulars the figure of Joseph of Arimathea in Michelangelo's " Pietà " in St. Peter's at Rome. He is seated on an old iron-clamped chest before a wooden desk, on which lies his life-work, the Chronicle, which is nearly complete. The inward contemplative expression of the eyes under their lids, wearied with long vigils, is

wonderfully life-like. In all Antokolsky's statues, the eyes have nothing of the hard and fixed stare, too often noticeable in modern sculpture, they express the working of the mind at the back of them. Yermak represents a contrasting type, proud, truculent and boastful, as described in the old Byliny "I am Yermak, the robber Hetman of the Don; I went o'er the blue sea, I destroyed the ships . . . Now, O Orthodox Tsar, take my rebellious head, an' thou wilt, but with it I offer thee the empire of Siberia."

Antokolsky always spoke of his "Christian Martyr" as "the spiritual sister of my Spinoza." It would be difficult to find a work in which the spiritual element triumphs so completely over the lack of sensuous beauty. A female figure is seated on a bench, white pigeons at her feet and by her side. She is so angular, so emaciated that her corporeal presence seems actually to be de-materializing before our eyes. The uplifted face wears an expression of tranced exaltation, the soul scarcely inhabits the body. To achieve such an impression of mystical incorporiety in marble—to preserve the purity, and make us forget the density of the material—is little short of a miracle. The work, however, seems to repel many who have not been nurtured on an ascetic art to the same degree as the Russians.

"The Death of Socrates" is another realistic work which repels for totally different reasons to the above. The pose of the figure—the philosopher is seen sprawling in a chair, with closed eyes, in an

attitude that is as suggestive of drunken-slumber as of death—seems to have been deliberately chosen for its disordered ugliness. All that consummate technical skill can accomplish, has been brought to bear on this statue. The anatomy of the figure is masterly; the slack and nerveless limbs have been closely observed from a corpse in which *rigor mortis* has not yet set in, the cloak which partially covers the body is an admirable study in drapery, we feel its soft woollen texture reproduced in the marble; but, when all is said, this might be a *post mortem* study of any unlovely old man. The soul of Socrates, its "plain grandeur, simple, calm and free" has been forgotten, and the treatment here is something less than truthful, for some memory of the soul usually lingers with the body for a certain time after it has actually taken flight.

- An excellent collection of Antokolsky's works, may now be seen in the gallery of the Academy of Arts at Petrograd, which contains replicas of many of his finest statues, besides studies and works of lesser importance. In addition to the masterpieces already mentioned, Antokolsky left a Procession of the Cross, a Head of St John the Baptist, a bas-relief of his little son whom he lost in 1876, a portrait of the gifted young painter Baron Mark Ginsburg who died in 1878, and other portrait busts

At the Academy it is possible to form a conception of Antokolsky's work as a whole, with the result that we are as much struck by the wide range of his

subjects, as by his vivid and unconventional treatment of them. So clear and masterly is his differentiation of types, that we could hardly believe all his creations to be the product of one brain, if we did not perceive the psychological link that holds them all together, as the most varied gems are held upon the selfsame thread ; and this link is the idea of suffering, reproach and condemnation. He shows us Christ condemned by Pilate , Spinoza, driven from the Synagogue and repudiated by his own people ; Ivan the Terrible, conscience-stricken, tortured by self-condemnation ; Mephistopheles making his own hell in solitude , Socrates, the victim of stupidity and superstition ; the pure, Christian maiden expectant of martyrdom —all these subjects of his choice, as distinct from those which were to some extent imposed upon him officially, prove his constant preoccupation with the more tragic problems of the human soul. In this respect he shows his affinity with other great Russians of his day . Dostoevsky, the musician Moussorgsky, and Perov the painter. Nor must it be forgotten that his racial traditions made it inevitable that he should keep the destinies of all ' God's banished ' persistently before his eyes.

In the historical monuments which he treated, perhaps more from necessity than freewill, he was too great an artist ever to work in a lifeless way. Most of these statues date from his earlier period, when he was filled with superabundant energy and fire. At the same time it is astonishing how completely

Antokolsky assimilated the traditions of the country into which he was born. His Russian rulers and heroes are splendidly vital conceptions, evoking with thrilling reality the respective periods in which they lived, ruled and fought ; and nowhere in these statues can we find traces of the superficial fluency, or the disposition to evade the profounder æsthetic problems that mar so much of the work of the modern Jewish artist.

Antokolsky's arresting dramatism and subtle psychology have influenced other arts besides his own. Shaliapin, the greatest living singer-actor, has not disdained to learn from the sculptor the secret of those moments of statuesque yet living immobility to which he has recourse now and again on the stage, suddenly rivetting our attention anew by the wonderful contrast with the impassioned gesture, which precedes and follows them.

Antokolsky, who died in 1902, left some talented pupils, but no true successor. Foremost among his disciples is Elias Ilich Ginsburg (b 1859). Like his master he is of Jewish descent, and in his youth he also experienced a hard struggle against adverse circumstances. Like Antokolsky, too, Ginsburg is wonderfully penetrated by purely Russian sentiment. It is possible that in his gallery of contemporary portraits, which contains busts and statuettes of Tolstoi, Anton Rubinstein, Verestschagin, Vladimir Stassov, Repin, Mendeleiev, and many other famous Russians, he has done his greatest service

to art; but he has also made his mark as a *genre* sculptor. The Russian Boy is Ginsburg's special study and delight. Having made a great popular success with his "Boy Musician," a happy young urchin twanging an improvised Jew's harp, the sculptor was content for some years to repeat the same sort of themes, and was therefore reproached with some justice as lacking variety of inspiration. Each of his boy groups, however, is a very charming and natural thing in its way, the conception of one who knows boy-nature well, and blends tenderness with truth and a spice of sly humour. "Breaking Rules," a school-boy prompting a chum who has not learnt his lesson, "Punished," a typical little Russian lad in a belted blouse sulking in the corner by the stove, "Bathers," boys splashing a comrade who shirks the first plunge, the "Boy and the Doctor," an unlovely, but pathetic piece of realism -- these are among Ginsburg's best known works. An example of his more recent style I saw in his studio in June 1915, before it was quite finished. It illustrates a scene from one of Tolstoi's short tales, "How the folk live." One bitterly cold evening the poor cobbler Simon finds on his homeward road a youth lying by the way-side. For a moment he hesitates whether to pass by or to go to his aid. Compassion conquers, and Simon, like the good Samaritan, bends down to succour the young man, who opens his eyes and gazes into the cobbler's face. Instantly Simon feels a great wave of love and pity in his heart. He strips off his

coat and wraps it round the half-naked wayfarer. Ginsburg has expressed the scene with great tenderness. The young man's face is alight with gratitude. The strong rugged features of the benevolent cobbler are those of Tolstoi himself.

Half a century ago the spirited wax groups and statuettes of Nicholas Liberikh (1828-1883) made a popular sensation and were imitated in other materials. Lansere, Posen, Shokin, and Ober, followed in his steps. Liberikh's Caucasian Warriors, Cossacks, horses and dogs were multiplied in bronze and silver, and copied by many inferior artists as time went on. Every visitor to Moscow and Petrograd knows how the windows of the shops in the Kouznetsky Most and Nevsky Prospect, are crammed with these miniature, and by no means despicable, works. They form, as it were, the light music of the art of sculpture.

At the Paris Exhibition of 1900, the works of Prince Paul Troubetskoï attracted a good deal of attention. Some enthusiasts went so far as to rank his statuary above that of Antokolsky, but this is hardly likely to be the verdict of posterity. Troubetskoï treats his subjects in a fresh and picturesque way, but often rather superficially, without much concern for the more serious questions of art. A large proportion of his statues are influenced by Italian art (he studied in Italy in his early days), and bear the stamp of studio work. At the same time, when he allows himself to be natural, his animals, especially horses, are very life-like. Two works which have a national



THE JEWS' HARP (THE BOY MUSICIAN)  
*By F. Gonsborg*



significance—the “Izvostchik” (a Moscow Cabby), and the “Samoyede with Dogs and Reindeer,” are carefully and sincerely observed. He has made several portraits of Tolstoi. His monument to Alexander III, erected in Petrograd in 1909, provoked much adverse criticism. I confess to a strong liking for this rather uncouth, and wholly unconventional, example of official art. The Emperor in a simple undress uniform, with a round cap perched on his head, sits firmly and rather heavily upon an ugly and realistic horse. He looks as though he had instantly pulled up in front of a regiment he was about to review. The horse, a powerful, long-headed beast, suddenly checked in his stride, his forelegs planted firmly in front of him, the weight of his body thrown on his hindquarters, is boring on the bit and his illustrious rider has a very tight hold on the reins. It strikes one as an excellent likeness of a virile and straightforward man in authority, an honest, if unflattering, piece of work from which one turns away with a feeling of respect.

It would be possible to add to my list of sculptors many others who are hardly likely to become more than names to nine-tenths of British students of Russian art, therefore I refrain, because in a book of this kind space is too valuable to be squandered in mere enumeration. The present century has, however, produced several sculptors of great promise, and more than one painter has shown himself capable in both spheres of art. Michael Alexandrovich Vrubel (1856-

1905)—that strange, mystical, riotously imaginative genius, produced a series of works in coloured clay for the manufactory of pottery at Abramtsev. These figures from Russian mythology seem to link us up to the point at which we started: the *Koumiry* worshipped by the Slav Elders in pre-historic times. Vroubel's Sea King, Sniegourochka (the Snow Maiden), Lel, Koupava and Sadko (all have their musical embodiments in the operas of Rimsky-Korsakov) are full of the suggestion of a primitive epic poetry. They were intended to be executed in coloured pottery, and those which the artist had time to supervise before his death, are things of strange and wonderful beauty. For the same firm Vroubel also designed some stoves and hearths in this semi-barbaric style, in which the spirit of the national epics and the atmosphere of the Russian landscape are blent with complete understanding and sympathy. But it may be objected with some justice that these works belong rather to decorative art than to sculpture. Of Stelletsky's work on somewhat similar lines, I speak in my chapter dealing with contemporary art.

A S Goloubkina is an artist of conviction, who works with a breadth, largeness and emotional intensity that suggest the influence of Michelangelo, besides that of the antique. In some of her early studies of children and young girls, she treats physiognomies, that are quite modern in expression—and more interesting than beautiful—in a style of classic

severity    Facial expression is her strong point. Her manner varies with her medium, in clay she is an impressionist, bold and rugged; in marble she shows a classic restraint and finish, in bronze she is forcible and rather tricky in her methods of heightening the salient portions of a work, in wood she finds the material that suits her best. The work of this reserved and original sculptor deserves to be better known outside Russia.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE NEW ART

National sentiment takes new forms. Archeological interests. Individual v. State Patronage. Free intercourse with foreign Schools. The decorative painters of to-day. Retrospective art. Roerikh. Bogaevsky. Chourlianis. Stelletsky. Bakst and Benois. Doboujinsky. Soudeiken. Koustodiev. The Future

THE latest phases of Russian art—those of the XX. century—are too complicated and changeful to be definitely classified as yet. I intend in this chapter merely to indicate the new movements in painting, and the conditions under which they have come into existence. If I entirely trusted the criticism of the last ten years I should, at this stage, destroy the body of my book, and link the contemporary art of Russia to the chapter upon iconography. But realizing that the injustice of the new generation to the one immediately preceding it is no new story in art or literature, I still believe in the survival of much of the now despised didactic, national and realistic painting of the XIX. century, I see that period joined to the art of to-day, by ligaments of living tissue, which cannot be severed with impunity, however loudly they may be derided by the “ young Barbarians ” of the newest tendencies,

who are the Russian equivalent of the Parisian "jeunes fauves" I, who was first introduced to Russian art at the moment when Realism and Nationality were its sword and buckler, who was guided in my studies by that sturdy and *intransigent* champion of the Russian cause, Vladimir Stassov, could not part lightly with the ideals which inspired my first sympathies, and brought my earliest conviction that the artistic destinies of Russia were approaching a great fulfilment. When I returned to the country after a few years' absence, I found myself in what at first sight, appeared to be an entirely strange world of art, inhabited by wholly new ideals. So much so that reading the progressive papers, and hearing the young generation talk, I might have believed that the liberalism of the last quarter of the XIX century ---our liberalism and progress---had either never existed or was scrapped and relegated to such dustheaps of art as the Tretyakov Gallery and the Alexander III Museum. It should, perhaps, have brought home to me the fact that I was old enough to lay myself resignedly on the shelf, but I had had a similar experience in Paris in 1907, when youth was worshipping in a kind of Dervish-frenzy, not only before the works of Gauguin and Matisse, but before those of their disciples, while, strange to say, quite a considerable number of people on the right side of senility and decrepitude were still taking pleasure in visiting the Luxemburg, and spending an hour or two in the society of Courbet, Moreau, Bonnet and Puvis de



cause he had served for over half a century Stasov knew perfectly well what he was doing, for he was not one of those intellectuals who stagnate after middle life. On the contrary, all contemporary movements in art amused and interested him. But though he thought all things lawful, he was convinced that many things were not expedient for his fellow countrymen. When he said that "if you strip a Russian of his nationality, you leave a man several degrees inferior to other Europeans" he spoke a harsh, but obvious truth. He was not one of those who believed that Russia was already rotten before she was ripe, but just because of his faith in her future destinies, he feared lest contact with some undoubted symptoms of decay and derangement might bring about this catastrophe. Convinced that his country had a great artistic mission to fulfil, he was of opinion that this required the renunciation of many fleeting impulses and alluring caprices which were less harmful to the older civilisations of the West. He mistrusted the *otsebyatnost*\* of the Russian character. His views, now considered old-fashioned, are nevertheless re-echoed by an acute modern critic, Serge Makovsky, when he says "Paris as a world capital may indulge in fads and cosmopolitan luxuries—she is rich enough in painters to afford them. Russia must still create her own school. We have not yet conquered the right to go outside our own land. We must not listen to *derniers cris*

\* Literally "beside-itselfness"

but to the voice of our Russian past, our history, life, and national genius."

In reality Stassov need not have been alarmed for the fruits of the healthy tree of Russian nationality. What he did not realize was the fact that Russian art needed no longer to dwell in that restricted citadel of *positive* national sentiment, in which it had taken refuge thirty years earlier, in order to defend itself from the encroachments of cosmopolitanism on the one side, and official pressure on the other. The garrison of the fortress, both musicians and painters were in danger, after a time, of perishing of inanition. Had Stassov lived a few years longer, he might, perhaps, have been convinced that the changes coming over the art of Russia were inevitable, that they emanated, in fact, from still deeper movements of the national conscience than those which had awakened the realistic and didactic instincts that saved it from the insincerities of the pseudo-classic and pseudo-Byzantine subjection of the XIX. century. Would he have seen that there were other verities besides those of *les choses vues*? Perhaps not, for there are two clear types of Russian character, and often they never mingle their convictions and emotions, as in the case of Tolstoi and Dostoevsky. As Mr Maurice Baring has pointed out, the former saw with a clear penetrating glance, only that which lay before his eyes, piercing ruthlessly beneath all superficial trappings and false sentiments. A patriot, devoted to everything that has its roots in the Russian soil,

"all that is not of the soil—anything mystic or supernatural—was totally alien to him." With the Dostoievsky type spirit speaks to spirit, ever striving to appeal to extramundane intuitions. Stasov and the realists of the 'sixties belonged to the Tolstoyan type, although they denied it, not being themselves *Bogoiskately*—God-seekers. But they coincided with that epoch of reform of which Tolstoi was specially representative, which, like most periods of reform, was distinctly anti-mystical.

. By the close of the XIX. century a very different spirit began to inform the art of Russia. Naturalism had run its course, and the new sympathies and tendencies bear witness to the mystical passions which lie deep in the heart of most Russians. Like incense in a censor, this mysticism only needs to be agitated by some emotional impulse to give out all its sweet and calming influences. We see the religious idea—interpreted in a very wide sense—in the works of Gé and Kramskoi, who were both God-seekers to a certain extent, although they sought to limit Him to the Man-God. It is evident in the work of Vasnetsov, who stepped in to save religious art from degenerating into materialism, who placed it once more in its old place in the house of God, and gave a new incarnation to the Slavonic Madonna. It is reflected in the tranquil asceticism of Nesterov's pictures with their chaste and saintly figures, which seem to hush and sanctify the landscapes, wherein they stand lost in ecstatic visions. We are aware of it in the

works of Vroubel, long after he gave up ecclesiastical painting, yet still sought to embody his Madonna-dreams in such feminine types as "Primavera" and "Koupava" the enchantress. It is an ever-present element in Scriabin's music, and is heard, though less persistently and clearly, in the compositions of Rebikov and Vassilenko. And in the art of the XX century it appears in varying degrees, and in many disguises, and, inextricably linked to the national sentiment, it is discernible to those who seek it beneath the superficial coverings of Decadence Post-impressionism, Futurism and all the other nomenclature, which is to true art, what the jargon of the fashion plates is to essential humanity.

The chief influences that have directed the movements of contemporary art in Russia seem to be threefold. First, there is the fervent interest in, and the accurate study of, archæology; the spirit of research into the primitive sources of culture which was active during the second half of the last century, laying bare whole strata of forgotten things, and leading men's imaginations back through "the wonder and mist of days" to civilisations and politics of which only the faintest echoes remained in the world. We are giants in the study of paleology as compared with our parents. Archaism, then, has entered deeply into Russian thought, so deeply that in painting, music and poetry we find it an active power. The most representative group of painters to-day are all "retrospectivists" in their different ways.

Another factor in the development of recent art is the exchange of an exclusive State patronage for individual initiative. The former was generous, but not liberal, since it aimed at drilling artists for the glory and service of the State. Its assistance was conditional. Patrons such as Tretyakov and Mamantov came forward—in most instances—to help genius upon its own terms. No country in the XIX century boasted a more generous-hearted and open-handed Mæcenas than Mamantov. Moreover in questions of art he saw eye to eye with the artist, a comparatively rare attitude with the patron, who usually wants to lay up treasure in heaven by endowing the public on earth; with the result that the public is occasionally consulted about his benevolent projects, while the artist is merely commissioned. It was with this larger and more sincerely æsthetic desire of helping art that Mamantov started his private Opera Company in Moscow, giving to Feodor Shaliapin his first chance of proving his great gifts, and calling out the activities of a whole group of talented young artists as designers and decorators. The Art Theatre at Moscow grew out of a similar impulse. Naturalism was in favour when Stanislavsky directed the first years of its existence. This did not satisfy the rising school of impressionists whose watchwords were “simplification, synthetisation and stylisation.” The Theatre founded by Mme. Kommissarjevsky in Petrograd was intended to meet these needs. Meierholdt's experiment with the Stoudia Theatre, and

the "Ancient" Theatre both represented phases of freer æsthetic advance. With the result that in decorative art, at least, Russia has now begun to repay western Europe with interest for what has been borrowed in the past.

Lastly, there has been that freer intercourse with other nations which could not fail to modify the positive and exclusive realistic nationalism of the "Society of Travelling Exhibitions" and "the Mighty Five" of Music. That phase of art was a necessity of the XIX. century. It was the protest of vigorous young people rebelling against their long subordination to foreign tutelage. The generation to which Repin, Verestschagin, Balakirev and Moussorgsky belonged limited itself in order that young Russia might eventually have a freer choice in art. And the contemporary painter has undoubtedly exercised his freedom in a way that was impossible when only a few talented students were selected and sent at the Government expense to centres where certain ideas were propagated, to be inoculated against germs of individual thought, much in the same way as a suspectedly hydrophobic case is now sent to the Pasteur Institute. The Russian artists of the XX century have wandered abroad very much as they pleased. They have not copied in droves in the galleries, nor herded in the conservatoires, they have simply passed through this or that studio or classroom—sometimes it must be confessed making an unnecessary noise in their entrance or exit; they have contemplated

only such pictures and listened only to such music as appealed to their taste, or lack of taste ; they have had the freedom of which they dreamed. If the result seems at a first glance to be somewhat chaotic, yet it is possible, even for a conservative critic, to discern elements which remain as purely Russian as those he loved and fought for nearly a generation ago. Moreover in stylistic, decorative art it looks as though Russia were building up a great harmonious school in which the technical virtuosity lacking in the works of the " Travellers " will find a place. The Russian genius for artistic co-operation seems well on the way to accomplish this.

In the Second Exhibition of the Post-Impressionists, held at the Grafton Galleries in the winter of 1912-1913, some of the later phases of Russian painting were to be seen. These pictures suffered by being judged in proximity with those belonging to a movement in which, with very few exceptions, the Russian artists represented had taken no part. They were not working with that group which, as Leo Bakst says, " wallows in the nethermost pit of coarseness, and begins by hating all that is old," but for the revival of the archaic national art, of its peculiar beauty and expressive power. But since we know very little of the old pictorial idiom of the Russians, the significance of such works as Roerikh's " Sacred City," Von Anrep's " Fisa playing on his Harp " or Stelletsky's " Tsaritsa and her Suite on a Pilgrimage," was completely lost upon us. An indiscriminating

public smiled, and classed them with Picasso's "Le Bouillon Kub," or Lewis's "Mother and Child," lumping them all together as "queer things," or part of "a huge joke"; whereas they were part and parcel of that same artistic tendency that we were running wild over in Diaghilev's mountings of Russian Opera and Ballet

Peculiarly representative of the "archaic" group is N. K. Roerikh (b. 1874), who had some half-dozen pictures hung in this Exhibition of 1913. He has been aptly described as the direct continuator of the artist of the Stone Age, who with a sharpened flint traced the rude semblance of familiar things upon the walls of his cave-dwelling. He is, however, a great deal more than this. He is a magician who can evoke a sense of remote and pre-historic times. His landscapes are often cold, grey and inhospitable as the scenery of the Quaternary Epoch; desolate contours of ice-worn hills, shores but recently carved into cliffs, and indented by the action of polar seas. Sometimes, as in "Triumph" there is not a trace of vegetation, and the only vestige of human life is a row of sepulchral *tumuli* raised over the remains of some primitive, long-forgotten heroes. Occasionally he uses this sunless scenery as the background for figures that match it in their ruthless stony appearance. When we look at them we recall with a shudder all the old lore of rock idols and stones which cry out, "uttering under the cover of night words which hold the key of mysteries belonging to a remote past." Roerikh has

moods such as might be inspired by Leconte de Lisle's poem "Solvet Seclum" For the most part his pictures, though imaginative, are wholly of this earth; but of this world he paints, as Voloshin says, "only that which is stone-blind, stone-dumb, and stone-deaf" Now and then he makes an excursion into an apocalyptic sphere; as in "The Last Angel" who stands among rolling clouds of fire, while beneath his feet crimson tongues of flame lick up the strong and glorious works of men's hands like leaves in an autumn fire; or again in "War in Heaven," where great masses of angry clouds, holding vague hints of supernatural forms, are sweeping over a lonely, boreal landscape, wherein the pigmy huts of a lake settlement only serve to accentuate the helplessness of mortals under the weight of the catastrophic sky Such a portentous cloud-army might have heralded that coming of Dchngis Khan and his horde. The "Meeting of Ancient Slav Druids" and "The Red Sail" are full of this epic enchantment. Roerikh designed wonderfully suggestive scenery for Borodin's opera "Prince Igor." He has also made many valuable studies of old Russian architecture Like most of the younger Russian school he works in several mediums, oils, water-colour and pastel. •

Among the "archaics" must be included also Constantine F Bogaevsky (b 1872) who, like Shelley and Roerikh, loves "all waste and solitary places" But whereas Roerikh is the interpreter of Northern latitudes, Bogaevsky is spellbound by southern

scenery. Not, indeed, that he is allured by its bright and riant moods ; it appeals to him only in its sterile and tragic aspects. The first of these artists is the painter of natural desolation, the second of human devastation. Bogaevsky's landscapes suggest those spots of earth, which have been desecrated by man's cruelty, and poisoned by his wrong thinking and evil doing. Such tracts of land as are haunted by tragic memories, "strange, savage, ghastly, dark, and execrable" ; where the hills are mortuary barrows, and earth's crust lies like a winding-sheet over dusty ossuaries of perished and half-forgotten civilisations. Most frequently he paints such aspects of the earth seen in the wan light of an eclipse, or illuminated by some devious comet, or a flock of stars shining cold and gigantic upon a doomed and untenanted world. His thoughts, however, do not "in a dark Cimmerian desert ever dwell" His later pictures, though still sombre, appear less baleful, because of the humanizing presence of trees, which are to this artist what stones are to Roerikh. It has been said that Claude Lorraine is Bogaevsky's spiritual ancestor ; but this can only be taken in the broad sense that both are idealists in landscape painting. The Russian for instance, never uses his scenery as the setting for mythological episodes. His great, solitary, wind-tormented trees, are the sole tenants of his landscapes ; their melancholy rustling fills his solitudes, softening the asperities of his solemn hills and the dead seas that reflect their rocky escarpments. His art is



*Rossini KT*

AN ITALIAN MEMORY



very poignant and ominous. With Bogaevsky we have journeyed as far from Shishkin and Kouindjy as these painters are remote from Poussin and Vorobiev. But still we are on this earth.

That is hardly the case with the pictures of N. K. Chourlianis (b. 1875). Those strange dream-designs seem to belong to some unfamiliar intermediate region. The dividing line between music and painting is almost obliterated in the work of this strange mystical painter. Moussorgsky in his "Pictures from an Exhibition," tried to make music a clear and positive medium, for the expression of things committed to paint and paper by his friend Hartman; Chourlianis on the contrary attempts the translation of music into terms of pictorial art. In his graphic illustrations of several musical compositions entitled "Allegro, Sonata No. 5", "Andante, Sonata No. 6", "Fugue", "Prelude and Fugue a Diptych," he is not merely borrowing musical terminology to suggest the meaning of his paintings as Whistler did. His art at that stage was really unable to choose between the domination of music on the one hand, and colour and form on the other. I have never seen these early attempts by Chourlianis to serve two masters, which are described by Serge Makovsky as "visions of impossible landscapes that never existed, which charm us not only by their rhythmical delicacy and profoundly musical mood, but by their qualities as pictures--their fine colour, and the decorative subtlety of their composition."



of his life he executed a wonderful series of "Legends"\* in *tempera*. He was suffering at the time from a cerebral affection, which caused his premature death. But these works, although they may be hallucinatory, are linked to this plane of existence by the representation of familiar things, seen in unfamiliar aspects. White steps leading from earth to heaven, Noah's Ark resting on the mountain-top beneath the framing arch of prismatic colours; strange temples and obelisks, each one a pharos, giving out a light at its apex which shines wan against the glow of sunset. Even these pictures, although stronger in colour and clearer in form than the earlier works, will not, as Makovsky observes, appeal to "rational or sceptical spirits". Chourlianis would have been the ideal decorator of some splendid theological fane in which Scriabin's "Mystery"† might have been enacted. Had not death deprived Russia of these two gifted artists, the one at the age of twenty-six, the other in his forty-fourth year, their eventual co-operation seemed predestined.

Alexander Stelletsky is another representative of this group, and perhaps the most definitely "retrospective" of them all. He is not concerned with protohistory, but with the traditions of iconography. Many people began by speaking of Stelletsky's works as mere *pastiches* of the old ecclesiastical paintings,

\* Exhibited at the "Alliance of Russian Artists," in 1910.

† Scriabin died prematurely in 1915, leaving an unfinished work entitled a "Mystery," which was to be a Symphony of music, words and gestures, combined with a secondary symphony of colour and perfume.

but came to the conviction that they were not doing justice to this artist who has, as it were, distilled all the vital juices from the archaic art, and turned them to account in his own pictures. Others, again, have fought against the influence of his painting, as one fights against a spell, but found themselves yielding at last, as one yields to the sedative impression of some grave monotonous chant, accompanied by the rhythmic swinging of censers. But even in yielding, all do not find this condition of soul sweet or ecstatic. Benois says "Stelletsy's art is a lament over our latter-day culture, over all that is dying or dead in us." And he adds that personally he finds himself a stranger to Stelletsy's paradise and saints, and to his Old Russia and Byzantium "it is a terrible Russia, monstrous to us of the present day; Byzantium, city of death in life, of lethargy, and a kind of spiritual quiescence. . . . A gloomy, mystic, cabalistic art."

In his decorative work for the stage Stelletsy calls up the same atmosphere half-mysticism, half-wizardry, and always pervaded by the dark austerity of Byzantine monachism. His scenery for Ostrovsky's "Snow Maiden" (*Sniegourochka*) transformed that charming vernal idyl, smiling and tearful as the spring itself, into a Vision of Judgment. He is better suited in the spirit and period of Count Alexis Tolstoi's drama "Tsar Feodor," for which he carried out a series of "make-ups"—stern images of saints, grim and forbidding magicians—besides the actual

scenery. The Tretiakov Gallery now contains the originals of his illustrations to "The Epic of the Army of Igor," on which he spent many years, the most astonishing quality of which is their fidelity to the past ; they impress us less as an archaic revival than as the authentic thing.

Stelletsy began as a sculptor, but being a born colourist and decorator, he soon went on to experiment with polychrome plaster casts and processions of figures in bas-relief against a coloured background. His work in this respect is still archaic in the best sense. Benois—who thoroughly appreciates the genius of Stelletsy, while shrinking from the visions which it invokes—sums up this artist's work in these words : " he does not merely resurrect costumes and characters, but teaches us how to see nature through the eyes of past generations, to whom the world was more fantastic, more alluring, more sinful and terrifying than it is to us." Stelletsy is certainly one of the outstanding decorative artists of the day.

With the work of Leon Bakst (b. 1866), and Alexander Benois (b. 1870), we are more familiar in this country, since they are the scenic artists *par excellence* of Diaghilev's productions of opera and ballet in Paris and London ; the creators of the wonderful art of many moods and many colours , subtle, passionate and sensuous—Russian art in " its holiday attire," out to allure and electrify the sophisticated Parisian and the simpler minded Britisher—an art skilfully and audaciously prepared for the purpose by such a past

master as Diaghilev, but which, it must be observed in passing, would certainly prove as startling to the Russian general public as to the majority of us Western Europeans. For in this dazzling, seductive, and not too-conscientious mode of production, this ruthless cutting of operas to throw particular characters into relief; this conversion of opera into ballet, and building of theatres within theatres; this disregard of the ideals of dead composers, justified by the brilliant success abroad of these perversions of their works—there is much that would shock the steady going, average patron of music and the drama in Russia itself. This, however, does not detract from the merits of Bakst's art, the splendour of his settings and the fascination of his costumes, wrought "in blood and fire," which would certainly eclipse the modest authentic dresses of a Stelletsky.

Bakst's retrospectivity knows no limits of period or country. His outlook is far more varied and possibly more superficial—than that of the artists whose works I have been reviewing. Voloshin says that whereas for Bakst the archaic is only a large room in a museum of antiquities, for the others it is the atmosphere without which they could not exist. The excavations carried on by Evans early in the century in the island of Crete stirred the imagination of the Russians. More particularly the discovery in the Palace of Knossus of a representation of King Minos—much resembling a North American Indian with a head-dress of feathers—seemed like



THE PLAYER ON THE GUSLE  
*By D. S. Steltzky*



a first palpable archæological link between the mythical Atlantean tradition, and the world of to-day. One of Bakst's most striking flights of imagination is his "Terror Antiquus"—an Aphrodite standing serene and unmoved amid a fearful terrestrial catastrophe. Her hair is elaborately braided, and she clasps a dove to her bosom. The poet Vacheslav-Ivanov interpreting this picture reveals all its historic symbolism, but to the ordinary spectator its central idea will probably be the triumph of feminine vanity, the complacency which no cataclysm has power to disturb, which we see so strangely and forcibly illustrated at the present moment where one column of our newspapers describes and advertises every sort of extravagant luxury, while another contains the description of cities ruined, of death and mutilation in horrible forms, of women crazed by brutality, and children dying of starvation by the roadside. But though Bakst's "Terror Antiquus" may fortuitously appear a cogent comment on the callousness of the eternal feminine, nothing could be further from his art than the didactic intention. I apologize for the mere suggestion. He is not always in this antique and philosophical mood. Roerikh may worship stones and Bogachevsky love trees, but Bakst's art is human; he delights in men and women and the clothes they wear. His drawing with all its vivacity has an almost classical severity and purity of outline, while he uses colour as the medium of psychological expression in a way no other artist has ever done before. Sometimes

his sultry colour-effects flaunt wickedness in our faces ; at other times they are subtly malignant. His finest work for the stage is probably the scheme he worked out for the ballet "Scheherezade," although in "Cleopatra" the contrasts are stronger and more startling.

The decorations for "Le Pavillon d'Armide" are generally regarded as Benois' scenic masterpiece. Here he reproduced the "grand art" of the XVIII. century, the polish, the graces and mannerisms of Versailles, to the manner born. One might suppose that he had made the period the special study of a life time. But later on we find this amazingly versatile artist producing a Chinese setting for Stravinsky's ballet-opera "The Nightingale," with the same consummate ease. Benois masters new spheres of nationality, and every variety of period, realising such novel effects of colour, and giving such point and humour to his pictorial commentary on the play or the ballet he is illustrating that he takes his place among the most gifted of Russia's many gifted *décorateurs*. He has not the glowing and passionate colour-expressiveness of Bakst, but he understands equally well the need of concurrence between line, tint and dramatic intention.

Another representative of the decorative group is E. Lanséré (Lanceray) who combines with the firmly knit lines of his almost ascetic and graphic art a certain degree of rococo romanticism. He has recently come into prominence with his decorations (including

the Legend of Persius) for the residence of M. Nekrassov in Moscow, and his strikingly original scenery for the production of Calderon's drama "St. Patrick's Purgatory."

Mstislav Doboujinsky (b. 1875) is a draughtsman of great merit and peculiar imagination. He feels the fascination and solitude of the city as other artists live under the spell of the sea and the forest. His ocean is a boundless expanse of roof-tops; he is the poet of the sky-scraper and the suburban dwelling. Only we feel that in all his dwellings—indifferent as they may outwardly appear to the comedies and tragedies enacted within their walls—there are haunting memories. Doboujinsky's subjects are not prosaic in treatment for he combines with his love of bricks and mortar a paradoxical touch of demonism which was revealed in his decorations for Remisov's mystery comedy "The Devil at Work." More charming was his scenery for "A Month in the Country," a play by Tourgeniev, showing a Russian country house of the 'thirties or 'forties. Doboujinsky has painted in Holland and England. A picture of his "The Tower Bridge" (*gouache*) is in the possession of M. Oustimov, Petrograd. He works chiefly in water-colour and occasionally in pastel.

S. Soudeikin is a versatile artist who paints ballet scenes, pastorals and stage landscapes, all conceived in a vein of sportive allegory, and reminiscent of the first half of last century. In his pictures Cupids, lovers, lambs, poets in Byronic cloaks, ladies in

hoops and powder, meet and mingle like perfumes in a potpourri. His landscapes, however, are not invariably *paysages sentimentales*, but often quite realistic, and his trees in particular are sympathetic, living things. Into his fields he loves to introduce a few Dresden china figures of human beings and animals, as though half-ashamed of these incursions into naturalism. His still-life shows a charming feeling for colour; and while his human beings are artificial, the moods of his china men and women and the shadowy tenants of his tapestry backgrounds are curiously human. Soudeikin painted the scenery for Maeterlinck's "Sister Beatrice," for the Kommissarievsky Theatre, and for various productions for the Theatre Zimin at Moscow, as well as for the Little Theatre. He works in oils, water-colours, pastel and tempera, and his pictures are much in demand among connoisseurs.

Other painters belonging to the modern "retrospective" and "stylistic" group are Somov, a Petrograd artist, with a tendency to reflect the French art of the XVIII. century; Petrov Vodkin, inclined to mysticism and influenced by Gauguin; I. Bilibin, an "archaist," who is becoming known to us in this country by his imaginative illustrations of Russian fairy tales.

The Tretiakov Gallery now contains some of the most characteristic works by Michael Alexandrovich Vrubel (1856-1905) to whom reference is also made in Chapters XII. and XIII. Here is the "Demon"—the Demon of Lermontov's poem—for which he

made many studies before he threw himself with feverish energy into the completion of the finished picture, dated 1910, on which he sometimes worked for fourteen hours at a stretch. On the summit of Kazbec lies the long sinuous body of the Demon, stretched at full length upon his folded wings, which are gorgeous as a rich brocade with their many tinted peacock eyes; and from out this mass of shade and colour peers the proud, evilly inspired face of Lermontov's "unhappy demon." Here, too, is the haunting "Night," (1900)—Pan, or a satyr, appearing through a tangled mass of crimson thistles to a group of horses shaggy and brown as himself; and also the famous picture of the crouching "Pan," "seated in Nature's cove, and one with Nature evermore." But the beautiful "Swan Queen" rising from the water in her billowy white robes that are half feathers, half white samite, "mystic, wonderful," and that amazing picture "Lilac," together with many other strikingly original things, are in private collections. Vroubel was a decorator of genius, not easy to place in the world of art; a painter of whose work it is impossible to give any adequate idea in a paragraph or a page.

N. Tarkhov tends more distinctly towards naturalism. In some of his early pictures he paints the gay life of the Paris Boulevards, the booths in the Faubourg St Martin, and so on. Later, he made motherhood and childhood his theme, and his studies of children asleep or at play are tenderly felt without the

least sentimentality. Few artists understand and paint cats better than Tarkhov; not the haughty mysterious feline beauty, who condescends to dwell with mortals for a time, but "the harmless necessary cat," who will sport with a child until both are tired, and then purr itself to sleep in its playfellow's arms. This artist is a fine colourist who has learnt his technique from the Gallic outdoor impressionistic school.

While M. Larionov is the chief leader of the revolutionary group of "young barbarians," who protest against the polished æstheticism of the Petrograd *décorateurs* by adopting a rustic simplicity and roughness of method, Boris Koustodiev (b. 1878) shows considerable affinity with the older school of painters—the Society of Travellers. Not, of course, in their didactic tendency, which has long since died out, but in his frank choice of subjects which are purely national. He loves the same themes which inspired Perov and his disciples—groups of peasants, ecclesiastical types, village festivals. But Koustodiev's point of view is very different, and also his methods of painting, for he paints gay scenes from popular life, and paints them with that love of clear, bright, audacious colour, the secret of which was unknown to the Russian artists of last century. Koustodiev was a pupil of Repin and assisted him in his great official picture "The Sitting of the Imperial Council of State" (1902). In his portraits—which are numerous, and mostly interesting—he is the continuator of Repin and Serov; but he does not quite rank as their equal.

as a "professional" portrait painter, for he does not, like these artists, almost invariably surmount the difficulties of representing a subject imposed upon rather than selected by him. Like all his generation he has been drawn into the great decorative movement which absorbs the best contemporary talent of the country. Koustodiev has painted comparatively little outside his native land, where he still finds out of the way districts that offer him attractive material in the way of colour and life. His best works are the series of village fairs and festivals, in which he transmits sympathetically and vividly realistic impressions of the Russian crowd; a bright kaleidoscopic movement shown against a rather stiff decorative background of wooden houses and trees. This artist draws in the sense that Serov drew, and is therefore regarded by "De-formatists" as being somewhat academic. There is no artist in Russia who shows himself more awake to the various movements taking place around him; fortunately he has also a strong individuality, so that he has never allowed himself to be drawn into a narrow realism on the one hand, or the artistic anarchy of "*les jeunes fauves*" on the other.

Russian art has never been pursued quite wholeheartedly for art's sake; it has always been influenced by "movements" social and religious. This may be a confession of its weakness, but it is a predominant feature which cannot be ignored. In the pictures dating from the last half of the XIX century, we find national sentiment, intimate pathos, dramatic

feeling, sincerity and loftiness of purpose—but nowhere that passionate preoccupation with technical methods, that effort after mature craftsmanship that is so characteristic of French art. Repin approached it; Serov and Levitan were both masterly in their different ways; but Russian art has not developed along these lines. The “stylistic” group of the XX. century have acquired the secrets of colour, and are *virtuosi* in many directions; but again we see them dominated by the influence of various “isms”—mysticism and even “barbarism.” Its future still seems to lie in the Russian power of intelligent assimilation of methods, and in the strong national individuality that for the last thousand years has turned these assimilated elements to its own use, stamping them with its own image and superscription. The folk still looms large in the art of Russia, it is still the well-head from which music and painting, and the choreographic art can draw unexhausted stores of fresh and living inspiration; but the folk is no longer limited to a few millions of recently liberated serfs, whose pitiable lot lay like a dark shadow over the art and literature of the last century. The folk now means all Russia, past, present and to come. The swing of the pendulum has brought Russian thought back from the realism and utilitarianism born of the problems which followed upon the Emancipation in 1861, from the pitying worship of the newly-created “People,” and the disillusionment, which led to Nihilism, to the older spiritual

view of things. The " Travellers " were too exclusively occupied with the problems of contemporary life; the painters of to-day are, perhaps, too greatly absorbed in retrospect ; but on the whole, it is well that the modern movement in art should keep pace with the national life. It is infinitely important that it should not wholly outstrip it, or become alienated from it. Against this danger, there is a great protective power in this awakened interest in the past, which is, as Serge Makovsky points out, not merely " a play of fancy," but a result of that " tendency to tradition "—that is an essential feature of the Russian character. If it manifests itself rather excessively in some of the painters, of whom I have written in this chapter, we may feel sure that the war, among many other beneficent activities, will purge the new Art of any retrograde, affected, or superstitious tendencies and leave it a clear and burning testimony to the beauty of the Russian soul



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